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BRITISH THEATRE.

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ENGLISH PLAYS.

VOL. XXXIV.

CONTAINING

TIMANTHES, ... BY HOOLE.
CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, . — MISS LEE.
ELFRIDA, ... — MASON.
SAMSON AGONISTES, ... — MILTON.
CREUSA, ... — WHITEHEAD.

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1797.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TIMANTHES.

A

TRAGEDY,

BY JOHN HOOLE, ESQ.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

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MDCCXCV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. BENSLEY.

WHEN first our bard advent'rous left the shore,
To tempt the drama's depth, untry'd before;
With beating heart his trembling sail he rear'd,
While critic sands and envious rocks he fear'd.
But your indulgence swell'd the prosp'rous wind,
And safe convey'd him to the port design'd.
The track, yourselves approv'd, he now pursues,
And for a second trip his care renews.

Oft in the silent hours of teeming thought,
As flatt'ring prospects in his bosom wrought,
Hope imag'd to his sight your starting tear,
And brought the welcome plaudit to his ear!
But while he now revolves that mutual fame
Should join the poet's and the actor's name,
O! let him here one tender tribute pay,
To early worth, untimely snatch'd away!
To HIM, *who once, alas! his scene inspir'd,*
Whose softness melted, and whose spirit fir'd!
While to the friend this grateful debt he pays,
Each gen'rous breast will sure confirm the praise;
With you his honest zeal must stand approv'd,
Which makes this off'ring to the man he lov'd!

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

	Men.
Demophoon, - -	Mr. Bensley.
Timanthes, -	Mr. Smith.
Cherinthus, - -	Mr. Wroughton.
Mathusius, - -	Mr. Clarke.
Adrastus, - -	Mr. Gardner.
Orcanes, - -	Mr. Davis.
	Women.
Olinthus, a Child, -	Miss Langrish.
Ismena, - - -	Mrs. Yates.
Cephisa, - -	Mrs. Bulkley.

Officers, Guards, Attendants, &c.

Scene, Thrace.

7 JU 52

Roberts del. Audinet sculp.

Mrs. SIDDONS as ISMENA.

Ism. Where shall I fly! Night stretch thy blackest wings
And hide us from mankind. —

London, Printed for J. Cawthorn, British Library, Strand, Dec.r 23 1794.

Stodhart del. Wilson sculp.

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand, Sept.r 5. 1795.

7 JI 52

TIMANTHES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Palace. Enter ADRASTUS *and* ORCANES.

Orcanes.

TIMANTHES is arriv'd.

Adra. The setting sun
Gilds his returning ensigns. Great Demophoon
Prepares to welcome home his conquering son,
And meet him with a father's love.

Orc. And yet,
Amidst this hour of triumph, sorrow clouds
The splendor of a victor's arms: this eve
Fore-runs a day of sad solemnity.

Adra. Orcanes, yes—that sun, whose cheerful light
Smiles on the harmless swain, that piping leads
His flock to fold, must, ere to-morrow's noon,
Behold his altar stain'd with guiltless blood.
Thou know'st, long since, the oracle requir'd
A virgin's life in annual sacrifice;
And every year on this returning day,
In solemn rites our weeping Thrace gives up
The melancholy victim.

Orc. Have the priests

Receiv'd the virgins yet, whose names must stand
To-morrow's dreadful chance?

Adra. Not yet—and thence
I fear new evils may arise: 'tis whisper'd,
I know not what, of something that portends
Contest and tumult to the state: Mathusius,
The hoary chief, beneath whose fostering care
Our young Timanthes learn'd the trade of war,
Grown old in toils, an alien to the court,
Now lives sequester'd, since the king displeas'd
Recall'd him from command, and in his stead
Left his brave son to guide the Thracian files:
Retir'd he dwells, where, on the city's skirts,
The sea in tempests breaks; or where, in calms,
Its glassy waves reflect the trembling towers;
With him resides his daughter, fair Ismena.

Orc. The coldness 'twixt Demophoon and Mathusius
Has reach'd the public notice; born to shine
In camps alone, Mathusius has not learnt
The soft address to rise in courts.

Adra. 'T is true,
And bred with him, Timanthes has imbib'd
His temper's warmth, which oft, by youth inflam'd,
Flies to extremes—Cherinthus, his young brother,
Is form'd of softer mould; yet both possess
Demophoon's heart; and born of different queens,
He in Timanthes seems to prize the gifts
Of manly fortitude, while in Cherinthus
He loves the milder virtues that revive
His queen Serena's memory.

Orc. Cherinthus
Is now expected from the Phrygian land,
Sent by Demophoon on some embassy
Of high concern—but see, the king approaches.

Enter DEMOPHOON, *attended.*

Demo. 'T is well—Mathusius' absence on the eve
Of this important day, when he should meet
My conquering son, the pupil of his arms,
Argues a stubbornness and disregard
A sovereign ill can brook: we own his deeds,
His years of service for the state; but tell
The all-presuming man, that merit, self
O'er-rated, cancels its reward—Adrastus,
Ought hear'st thou of Cherinthus?

Adra. No, my liege;
But to the Thracian port, the favouring winds
Must bring his vessel ere the close of eve.
Forgive a subject's freedom, but you seem
Oppress'd with secret care.

Demo. The time, Adrastus,
Now calls for meditation, and how few
Are a king's hours of peace, whose every day
Teems with some counsel for the public weal.

Adra. Yet this auspicious day my king must own
Sets not with common lustre, when your son,
The brave Timanthes, from the Scythian land,
Adds to his father's brow new wreaths of fame,
And, to his people, gives the palms of peace.
No, sacred sir, the hardy sons of Thrace
Did never celebrate with greater joy
A conquering chief's return.

Demo. Well pleas'd I hear
My faithful peoples' shouts ascend the sky;
And sympathize in those exulting sounds,
That, to the much-lov'd name of my Timanthes,
Join every wish—but hark! the victor comes.

Enter TIMANTHES, *attended.*

Tim. Royal sir!
To whom Timanthes owns the double tie
Of son and subject; see him now return'd
From Scythia's kingdom with success and conquest
To grace a father's throne.

Demo. Timanthes, rise:
The king and father give thee double welcome,
And treble praise to Mars the armipotent,
That gives Demophoon, in his darling son,
His kingdom's best defender.

Tim. Thanks to Heaven,
Whose smiles have grac'd my unexperienc'd arms!
I may, without a blush, confess my deeds:
Yes, we have conquer'd; never view'd the sun
A more extensive slaughter: 'midst the tumult
Of fear and rage, were blended, undistinguish'd,
The brave, the base, the victor, and the vanquish'd.
The day at length was ours; if you demand
A proof of this, behold yon captive bands,
Behold yon shatter'd arms and streaming ensigns.

Demo. 'T is not alone o'er the stern Scythian foe
Thou spread'st thy trophies; by subduing him,
Thou triumph'st in Demophoon's breast—mean-time,
In this embrace receive my pledge of love:
Thy father welcomes thee—proceed, my son,
Urge on thy course to honour's furthest goal,
Till, verging on the extreme of age, Demophoon
Beholds thy fame eclipse his own—but toils
Demand refreshment, and the weary'd arm
Of valour gains new vigour from repose.
But I have that requires thy private ear;

Let all, except Timanthes, leave the presence.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*

Demo. Come near, my son——thou little think'st how much
Thy happiness employs my careful breast.
While in the distant fields of fame, Timanthes
Encounter'd dangers for his father's honour,
Demophoon's thoughts were all employ'd at home,
To bless his glad return with halcyon days.

Tim. Have I not felt your goodness? since the time
Of early childhood to the ripening age
Of manly life, a father has prevented
My every wish.

Demo. Thou know'st Argea dy'd
Ere twice six moons had taught thy tongue to lisp
A mother's name—two years elaps'd, once more
I try'd the nuptial band: Cherinthus crown'd
This second union—but his birth, alas!
Was fatal to Serena; and with her,
In me the husband dy'd; and now the father
Engrosses all my soul.

Tim. Still may Timanthes
With filial duty sooth your days in peace,
And, oft as war shall call your banners forth,
Return with conquest home.

Demo. Thou canst not tell
How dear I hold thee—to the toil of arms
Love gives its soft relief, and beauty best
Smooths the rough front of war: though now my years
Roll forward, and the summer of my life
Yields to declining autumn, well I know
What youth has been, and what befits the age
When jocund spring leads up the laughing hours.

Tim. Alas! my lord, let not your goodness task
Timanthes' gratitude, I ask no more
To crown my labours than Demophoon's smiles.
What bliss is wanting to that chief, whose arms
Defend his sovereign's throne and guard his people?

Demo. Yes, my lov'd son, Cephisa's virgin charms,
Cephisa, daughter to the Phrygian king,
Shall be thy valour's great reward.

Tim. Cephisa!

Demo What mean'st thou? Wherefore hangs this sudden gloom
O'er thy chang'd features? Can Cephisa's beauties,
Whom sighing kings—nay more——

Tim. Yet hear me, sir,
Be not displeas'd with your Timanthes—Heaven's
My witness, gladly would I yield my life,
If such a sacrifice could aught avail
To insure Demophoon's peace—but I confess
Repugnance here——

Demo. Timanthes!——

Tim. Though I own,
(What fame has loudly spoken) every virtue
That decks the royal virgin, yet if aught
My deeds have merited———

Demo. Where can we find
Another partner for Timanthes' bed,
Unless a subject born? Think not, my son,
The shades of our great ancestors shall blush,
To see their line disgrac'd—from them we hold
The statute that condemns to death the subject
Who weds with royal blood; and whilst I live
I'm guardian of the laws, and will enforce them
Even with severest rigour.

Tim. Sacred sir———

Enter ORCANES.

Orc. The Phrygian ships, my lord, are now descry'd
Full steering to the port, their spreading sails
Swell in the winds that waft them to the shore.

Demo. 'T is well—go thou, my son, to meet thy brother,
And bid the princess welcome to the land:
Myself would with thee, but the priests demand
My presence at the temple, to consult
To-morrow's mournful rites.

Tim. [*Aside.*] Doubts rise on doubts!——
This dreadful sacrifice—yet stay, my father——

Demo. What wouldst thou?—speak——

Tim. Alas! I know not what——
Fain would I utter—but——

Demo. No more, I cannot
Prolong the precious time in vain debate:
The terms are settled, prince—then summon all
Thy virtue to respect a parent's will,
And dress thy looks in smiles to meet Cephisa.

[*Exeunt* Demophoon *and* Orcanes.

Tim. [*Alone.*] Ha! dress my looks in smiles to meet Cephisa!
What have I heard!—O! where's Ismena now,
That once could sooth my cares! whose beauty best
Smooth'd the rough task of war—Methinks even now
She chides the lingering hours—then let me fly,
Steal unperceiv'd upon the beauteous mourner,
And, with Timanthes' love, relieve her sorrows! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Garden. Enter MATHUSIUS *and* ISMENA.

Ism. Yet hear me, sir, nor chide your lov'd Ismena,
If she presume, with inexperienc'd counsel,
To guide a father's thoughts—Alas! I fear
The fond impatience of paternal tenderness
But makes that evil sure, which fortune else
May otherwise dispose.—Has not Demophoon
Dispatch'd some delegates to Delphos' shrine,
Once more to seek a period to the scourge
That hangs each year on our devoted Thrace?

Mat. From thence no comfort springs—This very morn
Arriv'd, they from the sacred tripos brought
Their doubtful answer, that the land must groan
Beneath the wrath of Heaven, till to himself
Th' offender shall be known, who, guiltless now,
Usurps a prince's right.

Ism. Mysterious all!

Mat. Mean-time destruction with remorseless fury
Hangs o'er my child, the darling of my age!
And shall I then consent——

Ism. Yet recollect
Your wonted fortitude—why should you hope
That, 'midst the weeping maids of Thrace, Ismena
Should stand exempted from the fatal urn?
You plead the king perhaps———

Mat. And just the plea:
Am I, because a subject less a father?
Apollo wills some virgin, nobly born,
Should stain his altar every year with blood.

Let him recall his daughter, kept at distance
With artful policy—let him expose
Her name in yonder urn, and let him prove
What pangs distract a wretched parent's breast
When his heart trembles, as the priest draws near
The sacred vase, while, with a solemn mien
His lips prepare to speak the victim's name.

Ism. Alas! my lord, cast round your eyes, behold
The Thracian court, and mark her proudest nobles
Whose hearts have shudder'd on this awful day
For a child's threaten'd life—'T is true, Arsene,
The first-born offspring of his queen Argea,
Resides at distance from Demophoon's palace:
But yet reflect, that, singly to refuse
Ismena's name, will but incense the king:
Let not my danger urge you to expose
Your age to further woe—too much already
He views you with an unpropitious eye.
I dread to think, if now too far provok'd,
What mischief may ensue!

Mat. In vain thou tell'st me
Of wrath or hatred in his breast, while reason
Asserts my cause, and Heaven inspires my thoughts.
Was it for this I taught his arms to conquer,
And bred his son to greatness? Yes, by me
The Scythian foe is vanquish'd; and by me
This eve Timanthes comes in triumph home.

Ism. Timanthes, O! my heart! [*Aside.*] What says my father,
Is then the prince return'd?

Mat. He is, Ismena,
And comes in happy hour: his generous soul
Disdains not to remember that Mathusius

Taught his young sword to reap in glory's field:
To him I will appeal—he will, with pity,
Behold a parent's sufferings.

Ism. Yet, my father,
Should the brave prince, with sympathizing heart,
Plead vainly with Demophoon, O! forbear
To urge the contest further: hope, the genius
That still has watch'd your years of danger past,
Will guard your age from anguish.

Mat. Cease, Ismena,
To oppose, with fruitless words, my fix'd resolve:
No, if I still must be condemn'd to feel
This anguish of the soul, yon haughty monarch
Shall share with me those fears a father knows,
Nor stand excluded from Mathusius' pangs! [*Exit.*

Ism. [*Alone.*] The tempest thickens round! my little bark
That, till this hour has stemm'd life's boisterous wave,
At length, I fear, must sink—Timanthes comes,
He comes with conquest crown'd, but where are now
Ismena's smiles to meet him! Is it thus,
With tears ill-omen'd, with foreboding sighs,
I give him welcome here!

Enter TIMANTHES.

My life! my lord!
Com'st thou again, preserv'd from danger's field,
To these fond arms!

Tim. Yes, 'midst the sterner deeds
Which glory claim'd, thy image, present still,
Sooth'd every toil—And art thou then the same
As when I left thee at the call of honour?

Ism. Canst thou then doubt me! If thy heart, Timanthes,

In the rough shock of war, and clang of arms,
Forgot not softer hours of peace and love,
Think'st thou, Ismena, 'midst these shades, that oft,
Have witness'd to our mutual vows, would ever
Cast off remembrance that she once was happy?

Tim. Forgive the fondness of o'erflowing love
That wishes still to hear those gentle lips
Breathe their soft vows—How fares my boy Olinthus?
The precious fruit of our connubial joys,
That Heaven bestowed, while, distant with my father,
Four springs renewing since the Thracian grove,
Timanthes march'd against his country's foes?

Ism. Some god that watches o'er this pledge of love,
Sure crowns his tender age with growing beauty,
Or the fond mother with imagin'd grace
Has deck'd his infancy; his looks already
Assume thy manly sternness; when he smiles,
He 's all thyself; and oft as I can steal
A wish'd-for look, I gaze with rapture on him,
And think I view Timanthes, till deceiv'd
With the dear thought, I strain him to my breast,
And in the sun embrace the absent father.

Tim. What place contains our infant hope! O! lead,
Lead me, Ismena, where these longing eyes
May in his features read a father's likeness,
Or see them blooming with his mother's charms.

Ism. Alas! my lord, awhile suppress these warm
Paternal feelings—some few miles remote,
Sequester'd from the city, on the edge
Of the rude forest, Arcas and Ianthe,
A rustic pair, unconscious of their charge,
Rear his young life—Amidst the observing eyes
That watch a prince's deeds, you must beware,

And but with caution see him—Heaven allows
To us with scanty hand the parent's joys,
In the soft moments of o'erflowing nature,
To clasp him in our fond endearing arms,
And bless the prattler with the tongue of transport.

Tim. By heaven it shall not be—I 'll burst at once
From dark dissimulation's veil—'t is now
The crisis of our fate!

Ism. It is indeed:
To-morrow's sun lights up the solemn day
Of annual sacrifice: Ismena's name
Must stand enroll'd amongst th' elected train
That wait the dreadful chance.

Ter. Ismena's name!

Ism. 'T is so decreed—yet think not that I fear
To die for Thrace—no, for her country's sake,
Ismena gladly would embrace her doom.
But Phœbus' words demand a virgin's blood;
Shall I, a wife and mother, dare approach
His sacred altar, an unhallow'd victim?
Thus, if I speak or not, I still am guilty,
My silence Heaven offends, my speech the king.

Tim. The king must know the secret of our nuptials:
All, all demands is now—for, O Ismena,
This very hour perhaps Cherinthus brings
A rival to thy love—Cephisa comes;
But now Demophoon urg'd me to receive
The Phrygian princess—but, be witness, Heaven!
Not all the cruel policy of courts,
Not the stern mandates of a king and father,
Shall e'er dissolve those tender ties which love
Has form'd, and virtue sanctifies.

Ism. Alas!

What can it all avail! our union published,
Thou know'st the sentence of the law impends
On my devoted head.

Tim. A monarch made,
A monarch can revoke the stern decree:
Demophoon, though severe, is still a parent,
His kind indulgence shall avert the stroke
That threats Ismena.

Ism. Rather let it come:
Too long, Timanthes, hast thou sacrific'd
Thy glory to Ismena—O! reflect
How ill the name of Thracia's heir agrees
With secret nuptials and clandestine love.
Let me embrace my fate—I die with joy,
Since I, in death, can call Timanthes mine!

Tim. O! fortune, wherefore did thy lavish hand
Give my Ismena every charm, yet place
Her virtues in the vale of private life?
But be it so——it rests on me to amend
The partial error—Thrace, some future day,
With joy shall view her partner of my throne.
Farewell, my love, and let this fix'd assurance
Dwell in thy mind, and calm thy troubled thoughts:
Timanthes will be ever watchful o'er thee,
And hold thy peace far dearer than his own.

[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Sea-port. Enter CHERINTHUS, CEPHISA, *and Attendants.*

Cephisa.

WHAT means this sadness, prince? With silent gaze
You look and sigh, and if with friendly speech
I urge your converse, when you seem prepar'd
To tell me much, your faltering tongue is mute.
Where is your wonted cheerfulness? the grace
That season'd your discourse? Are you in Thrace
The same Cherinthus that I knew in Phrygia?
Or is it thus, with melancholy looks,
You Thracians to her lord conduct a bride?

Cher. If my afflictions bear a sad presage,
On me, fair princess, every evil fall:
My stars can little add to griefs like mine,
Nor breathes a wretch so hopeless as Cherinthus.

Ceph. And claims Cephisa then so little share
In your esteem! The time has been——

Cher. Forgive
This cold reserve—and yet believe me, fair one,
There is a something here commands my silence.

Ceph. 'T is true, I am a woman, and your secret
Were ill confided to our sex's weakness.
I urge no further—lead me to the palace.

Cher. Yet hear—those eyes like lightning pierce my soul,
And all my firm resolves are lost before them.
O! turn, Cephisa, and with gentler looks
Unbend those brows, while trembling I confess,

'T is thou hast robb'd me of my peace—I gaze
With rapture on thy matchless charms; I own
My love is fruitless all, that these fond wishes
Would grasp they know not what: I know that death
Alone can end my pains.

Ceph. What means Cherinthus!

Cher. I know too well I should offend—And yet
The faults of love——

Ceph. Forbear—I 'll hear no more——
Is this the brother of Timanthes? This
The prince deputed by the Thracian king?
And is it thus Cherinthus thinks to guard
That faith a brother and a father claim?

Cher. I own my crime—I know that every tie
Of son and brother should forbid my passion.
Why was I only singled by Demophoon,
To bring thee to Timanthes? Could I view
Thy charms, and yet resist?—I saw and lov'd.
Each day beheld me near thee, while the name
Of kinsman gave a license to my tongue;
Nor did this name deceive the world alone,
I was deceiv'd myself—that love, which made
Me sigh for ever for Cephisa's presence,
Appear'd but duty, and a thousand times
I thought to paint the affections of a brother,
While my too eager speech betray'd my own.

Ceph. [*Aside.*] Alas! 't was not in vain—Cephisa too
Perceiv'd a something she would fain disown.

Cher. And yet sometimes I felt a flattering hope:
Methought I oft observ'd a tender sigh
Steal from thy breast, view'd in thy eyes a softness
That seem'd much more than friendship——

Ceph. Hold, Cherinthus,

Thou dost begin to abuse my easy nature.
It ill befits the daughter of Nicanor,
Affianc'd to Timanthes, heir of Thrace,
To hear with calmness these injurious vows,
At once destructive to her peace and fame.

Cher. Forgive me, princess, and I will obey;
Thou shalt no more reproach my daring love,
Injurious to thy glory—Spite of all
The pangs that rend my heart, conviction's force
Dwells in thy words, and I'll no more offend.
No, I will strive to wear the face of joy,
And kindly bless my happier brother's fate.

Enter TIMANTHES

Welcome, Timanthes, to thy native land,
Fame, the loud harbinger of thy approach,
Has rous'd each Thracian son to hail thy presence,
And I but join the common voice.

Tim. Receive
In this embrace my thanks—but say, Cherinthus,
Is this the royal fair one who forsakes
Her country's gentle seat to visit Thrace,
And with her beauties gild our rougher clime!

Cher. It is—behold, while others with applause
Congratulate thy fortune, what a treasure
Thy brother brings, to give thee every blessing
That love and beauty can bestow.

Tim. Her looks
Bespeak perfection—let Timanthes then,
Imperial virgin, greet thy safe arrival
From Phrygia's happy shore—Vouchsafe awhile,
Cherinthus, to retire apart—my thoughts

Revolve some secret of import, that claims
The princess's ear alone.
Cher. I shall obey.
What can this mean? But wherefore ask, or what
Avails their converse to the lost Cherinthus? [*Walks aside.*
Tim. How shall Timanthes, beauteous princess, dress
His thoughts in apt expression? I should now
Pour forth the raptures of a heart, decreed
To excellence like yours—but O! there is
Fatality in man, and oft when Heaven
Holds out an unexpected blessing to us,
Some mystery forbids——
Ceph. What would the prince?
Let not Timanthes seek the low disguise
Of art, the refuge of ignoble minds,
But boldly, as he meets his foes in battle,
Speak out his secret soul.
Tim. The statesman oft
Joins with the specious plea of public good
Two hearts averse: our parents have decreed
An union to thyself perhaps ungrateful.
Thy virtues might demand the noblest heart;
But fate forbids us ever to unite:
There is a bar which nothing can surmount;
My father knows it not, nor must I speak it;
Refuse, refuse me then, enlarge my faults,
And thus preserve thy fame, my peace, and life!
Ceph. 'T is well—my lord——
Tim. I see the conscious pride
Of greatness rising on thy cheek—my presence
But adds to your displeasure—my Cherinthus
The care be thine, with every mark of honour,

Such as may suit her station and desert,
Hence to conduct the princess to the palace. [*Exit.*

Ceph. What have I heard! Is this the boasted youth
Whom fame extols for gallantry and arms?
And is it thus he treats a virgin, sprung
From Phrygia's scepter'd kings!——Neglected! Heaven!
And shall I tamely bear this outrage?

Cher. [*Coming forward.*] Princess,
What indignation rises in your breast?
Your looks are chang'd—has then my brother——

Ceph. Yes,
I see your mutual purpose to betray me:
Was it for this I left my native land,
Left the fond arms of an indulgent father,
To meet with insult on this foreign shore!
To bear unmov'd the injury that waits
Cherinthus' passion, and his brother's scorn?
But if Demophoon——

Enter ADRASTUS.

Adra. To the fair Cephisa,
Our sovereign wishes health; the Thracian palace,
Adorn'd with every pomp, expects your presence;
Demophoon now, as annual rites require,
Sequester'd with the priests till morning dawn,
Invokes the powers divine; mean while he sends
By me to pay the tribute of respect
Your rank and sex demand, to lead you now
Where suppliant crowds attend with duteous zeal,
To pay their homage to their future queen.

Ceph. I thank thee, lord—Cephisa hopes no less
From great Demophoon and her father's friend.
Cherinthus, let us hence—but still remember

Thy plighted word; for know, whatever chance
Subjects Cephisa to unlook'd-for insult,
Yet nothing from her mind can e'er erase
Such thoughts as fit the daughter of a king. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Changes to the Garden. ISMENA *alone.*

Ism. What would my fate!—But now Mathusius bade me
Prepare for flight—and whither must I fly?
What region will receive forlorn Ismena,
To end her wretched life!——O, my Olinthus,
Must I forsake thy innocence—forsake
My much-lov'd lord without one parting look!
I sicken at the thought———

Enter TIMANTHES.

Tim. What new distress
Hangs o'er my love! though distant from thy sight
My sympathizing spirit mourn'd with thee,
And whisper'd that thy sorrow claim'd my aid.

Ism. O, no!—thy cares are vain—leave, leave me then
Alone to perish—the big tempest swells
That soon must hide me from thy sight for ever.

Tim. What means Ismena!

Ism. I must quit Timanthes—
Mathusius warns me hence; but now he left me,
Some dreadful purpose labouring in his breast:
Yet ere we part, to thy paternal care
I here commend my child; for me embrace him,
Give him this kiss, and, when his ripening age
Can feel compassion, tell him all my story.

Tim. It must not be; Timanthes with the wings
Of love shall fly, o'ertake thy fleeting peace,
And bring her back to her forsaken home.
Soon as the morning dawns I'll seek the king,
With filial reverence clasp his honour'd knees:——
Doubt not, my love, but all shall yet be well.

Enter MATHUSIUS.

Mat. My daughter, let us haste——art thou Timanthes,
Son of Demophoon? Let me gaze awhile;
Those features once bespoke thee kind and brave;
Till now I ever held thee such—but say,
Is not injustice stamp'd upon thy nature,
And all thy father in thy heart——O! no,
Thou 'rt still the same—yes, I had sought thee, prince,
Thy old Mathusius, once rever'd, in thee
Had vested every hope—but now 'tis past———

Ism. Alas! my father, must Ismena then
For ever load a parent's breast with anguish?
Am I the unhappy cause?

Mat. Now hear, Timanthes,
And if thou ever held'st Mathusius dear,
Thy generous breast will feel a father's pangs—
A father, whom the rage of tyrant power
Pursues to ruin——O! my child, my child!

Tim. Mathusius, speak—Has then Ismena's name
Been drawn to-morrow's victim?

Mat. No—Demophoon
Has doom'd her life a guiltless sacrifice
Without the sentence of the fatal urn.

Tim. Condemn'd to die, the lots of death undrawn!
All-powerful Gods!———

Ism. O, sir! weep not for me,

I merit not the tears that stain those cheeks,
Too deep they enter here—no, let me bear
Affliction's pressure, till the fainting sense
Sink with its anguish; so I may, retir'd,
From mortal eyes, indulge my griefs alone,
Nor bend that hoary head to earth with sorrow.

Tim. It cannot be—Mathusius, thou 'rt deceiv'd——
How couldst thou kindle thus the king's resentment
Against her helpless life?

Mat. Because I sought
To exclude Ismena from the lots of fate,
Because I durst produce his own example:
But now I met him near the temple's porch,
Encompass'd by the priests; with all the warmth
Of a fond father trembling for his child,
I urg'd, entreated—but in vain; the king
Beheld me with an haughty eye; enrag'd,
My tongue reproach'd the monarch's partial voice,
That to his subjects, prodigal of death,
Gave to the bloody knife our Thracian virgins,
While kept at distance from the suffering land,
His own Arsene shunn'd the fatal stroke.

Ism. I tremble for th' event—not for myself,
But thee, Ismena fears——Ah! wherefore, sir,
Would you for me rashly incense a power
Which sovereigns, ever jealous, still defend?
What answer made the king?

Mat. His indignation
Repress'd within himself, found little vent
In words; at length—'presumptuous man, (he cry'd)
'Soon shalt thou feel that still Demophoon knows
'How to avenge affronted majesty.'
Then turning from me swift, the temple gates
Receiv'd and shut him from my sight—since when

I've heard that secret orders have been given
To seize Ismena.

Tim. Ha!—direct me, Heaven!
What now befits Timanthes—— [*Aside.*

Ism. Yes, it dawns!
The work of fate now opens to my view,
And all must be reveal'd; be firm, my soul,
And nobly meet the trial. [*Aside.*

Tim. Is it possible!
In this extreme what course remains?

Mat. Beside
The clifted rock, mann'd with a chosen few
And trusty servants, rides a bark prepar'd
With secret care, that will convey us hence,
To some far distant, hospitable clime,
Where 't is not criminal to be a father.

Tim. It must not be——O, sir!———

Mat. What means Timanthes?

Tim. Ismena must not quit the Thracian shore.

Mat. Not quit the Thracian shore!—now by yon powers
That sit in judgment o'er a father's wrongs,
No human breath shall stay us—haste, my daughter,
Prepare this instant to depart———

Tim. Distraction!
And shall I then permit—Mathusius, hear:
Urge not my temper further—well thou know'st
My soul has ever held thee as her best,
Her earliest guide—if I oppose thee now——

Mat. Is this thy love? Wouldst thou forbid a father
To save his only child from cruel death?

Tim. O, no! thou canst not tell how dear I prize
Her safety here—come danger in her worst,
Her ugliest form, this breast shall meet the dart
That threats Ismena.

Mat. We but waste the time,
That, with destruction wing'd, unheeded flies:
Away, my daughter———
Tim. Not th' united force
Of earth shall bear her hence——
Mat. Nay, then the sword
Shall vindicate the rights a father claims.
Ism. Hold, sir, and hear Ismena——O! Mathusius,
Dost thou not see some secret labouring here
Too big for speech—thou claim'st a father's right,
And sacred is that claim; but yet beware,
Nor let the hasty sword, with thoughtless rage
Invade a right more sacred than your own.
The prince—how shall I speak?
Mat. What new alarm
Runs through my soul!—Is 't possible?
Tim. My father,
For such thou art—think not thy breast can feel
Severer anguish for Ismena's danger
Than what a husband feels.
Mat. Her husband!
Tim. Yes,
She is, she is my wife—then judge, Mathusius,
If I could bear, without the sharpest pang,
To see her torn for ever from my sight.
Mat. Ah! prince, what hast thou done! thy cruel love
Has fill'd the measure of Mathusius' woes.
Thou most unkind! Is this the recompense
Awaits my suff'ring age?—Unhappy girl!
To tye the fatal knot that ends in death!
Ism. Here prostrate at your feet, permit me now
To own the fault excess of love inspir'd:
And yet you can forgive; for if I read
Those looks aright, resentment dwells not there:

Nor will I plead the virtues of the prince,
Though these, my lord, were oft your lips fond theme,
While under covert of yon arching shade,
I drank, with greedy ears, his grateful praise.
Mat. No more, my child!—O! I forgive thee all!——
But dangers thicken round; these nuptials known,
The rigid law shall seal thee for destruction,
And mock a father's sorrows.
Tim. No, Mathusius,
By every future hour of hop'd-for peace,
My life shall be her safe-guard.

Enter Officer *and* Guard.

Offi. Pardon, sir,
If, with reluctance, I obey the charge
My sovereign gives—Guards, bear Ismena hence.
Mat. What means this violence?
Ism. The lot is cast!
Come every spirit that has fir'd my sex,
Through the long records of succeeding time,
To dare beyond the softness of our kind,
Now steel my thoughts—my fortune claims it all!
So may'st thou own, my father, though one fond
Unguarded hour betray'd my yielding soul,
Yet shall the sufferings of this awful day,
The little span of life that fate allows,
Atone for every error.
Tim. Death to hear!
Unhand her, slaves!
Mat. Age has not yet unnerv'd
This arm so far———
Offi. Forbear—if either moves
To give her aid, this dagger drinks her blood.

Tim. Inhuman villain! hold——
Offi. The royal mandate
Shall justify my deeds——Away.
Ism. Yet stay——
A moment's pause—still, still the woman here
Is struggling in my breast—my father!—oh!——
I dare no further—— [*Looking at* Timanthes.
Mat. Speak———
Ism. Think not, Mathusius,
Though black adversity now folds me round,
That aught of anguish for myself can shake
Thy daughter's mind—No! I could bear it all!
But when we view the pangs of those we love,
The firmest temper shrinks, and even the tear
Of weakness then is virtue——Gracious Heaven!
Protect, defend—I would, but must not speak——
Ye powers! who read my thoughts, supply the prayer
I cannot utter, and whate'er her doom,
At least, in those she loves, preserve Ismena. [*Exit guarded.*
Tim. O! give me patience, Gods!
Mat. Earth opens not,
Nor lightnings fly to punish such injustice!
And shall we say Jove watches o'er mankind!
Timanthes, speak—for we are now united
In bands of wretchedness.
Tim. Go, good Mathusius,
And learn the place to which they bear Ismena;
For should I strive in vain to appease my father,
Yet love shall point the way.
Mat. No—every hope
Is now extinct, and black despair shuts up
The gloomy prospect.
Tim. Can the son in vain

Plead with a father for his life, his all!
O! 't is a cause will call down every soft
Propitious power that feels for human sufferings,
To heal the anguish of a parent's breast,
To calm a lover's and a husband's pains,
To arrest the hand of fate, and save Ismena!

[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Royal Apartment. Enter DEMOPHOON *and* CEPHISA.

Demophoon.

RETURN to Phrygia, princess! Canst thou ask
Abruptly thus to bid adieu to Thrace,
While now Timanthes, with presaging hope
Anticipates the hour, decreed to bless
The prince and lover, when this solemn day
Shall pass, whose rising light now faintly strikes
The sacred laurels, where the temple's grove
Receives the dawn?

Ceph. Believe me, my resolves
Are such as suit my sex and rank; the name
Of virgin and of princess both require me
To quit the Thracian palace—for Timanthes
No longer urge——

Demo. I can forgive thy anger:
Nurs'd in the pleasures of the Phrygian court,
A Thracian's manners may be harsh to thee:
Wonder not then if so Timanthes seems,
Inur'd to rugged arms; be thine the glory
To teach him first the flowery path that leads

To the calm dwelling of domestic sweets:
What cannot charms like thine?—yes, fair Cephisa,
Those eyes shall thaw the ice around his heart,
And warm the youth to inexperienc'd love.

Ceph. My lord, it cannot be—as soon this morn
That spreads the veil of sorrow o'er the land,
Might raise each heart with gladness, as Cephisa
Finds happiness in Thrace—at thy command,
And thine alone, the ships can quit the port,
To bear me back to my paternal land:
Give orders then to loose the bark, whose sails
Must waft me hence for ever.

Demo. Think not, princess,
Demophoon would detain thee while thy thoughts
Revisit Phrygia; yet permit me now
To say I hop'd far other from the daughter
Of him, whose wish'd alliance promis'd all
An anxious king and parent could demand.
But yet, whate'er thy wish, till the next sun
Thou canst not hence; no vessel from the port
Presumes to rear the mast, or spread the sail,
Till this sad day declines.

Ceph. Since now the law
Forbids to quit the realm, I must submit
To breathe the air of Thrace—yet I respect
The friend of great Nicanor—but remember
My father's honour and my own; nay more,
Demophoon's urges me to leave a court,
Where every moment's voluntary stay
Insults my sex's rights, and stains my glory. [*Exit.*

Demo. [*Alone.*] Ha! whence is this? sure something lurks beneath
That yet I know not—I remember now,

When first I nam'd the princess, that my son
Heard with reluctance——should he disobey
A father's just resentment——but no more,
It cannot be—I 'm alarm'd too soon.

Enter TIMANTHES.

Tim. Where is my king?
Demo. Timanthes, thou art come
In happy time——
Tim. Dread sir, permit your son
To sue for grace and pardon——
Demo. Say, for whom
Dost thou intreat?
Tim. For an unhappy victim;
One, whose misfortune is her only crime;
The daughter of Mathusius——
Demo. 'T is too late;
Her doom is seal'd——
Tim. Grant to your suppliant son
Her guiltless life!——
Demo. And dar'st thou still presume
To name her? If thou valu'st ought my love,
Forego this vain request.
Tim. Alas! my father,
I cannot now obey you——O! if ever
I have deserv'd a parent's tenderness,
If, with a bosom seam'd with honest scars,
I have return'd a conqueror to your arms,
If e'er my triumphs in the glorious field
Have drawn the tear of pleasure from your eyes,
Release, forgive Ismena! lost, unhappy,
She has no friend but me to plead her cause!
And shall she perish!—think you view her now

In early bloom of life, who never knew
The thoughts of guilt, stretch'd on the fatal altar
In all the pangs of suffering—think you see
The life-warm blood gush from her tender breast,
Hear the last accents from her trembling lips,
Behold her dying eyes—but thou art pale!
Why look'st thou thus upon me!—O! my father!
I see, I see the gracious signs of pity;
Do not repent, my lord—indulge it still,
For never will I quit these sacred feet
Till thou hast given the word to spare Ismena.

Demo. Rise, prince!——Almighty powers! what must I think,
That with such tenderness thou nam'st Ismena.
Yet mark how far my fond indulgence yields;
On one condition I recall her sentence:
Ismena yet may live; but if the father,
Impell'd by love, forgets his just resentment,
Let not the son forget the sacred ties
Of gratitude and duty——

Tim. Never, never
Timanthes shall forget them; every hour
To come shall bless your goodness for this pardon,
Which life itself were cheaply given to purchase.

Demo. No, my dear son, my future peace and thine
Ask but one sacrifice, and all is well:
What hast thou done to offend the Phrygian princess?
Learn to respect my choice in fair Cephisa——
Have I not felt compassion for thy weakness:
Do thou preserve my honour—think, Timanthes,
Nor let the breath of rumour taint my name;
Then let us seek Cephisa, there, my son,
Instruct thy lips to deprecate the anger

I fear thy scorn has justly rais'd—to-morrow
We 'll to the temple, thither shalt thou lead
Thy beauteous bride, and at the altar there,
At once before th' attesting gods fulfill
What justice claims from thee and from Demophoon.

Tim. My lord, I cannot——

Demo. Prince, thou yet hast heard
The father only; force me not to employ
The king's authority.

Tim. Sacred alike
I hold the dictates of the king and father;
But love disdains compulsion——

Demo. In the heart
Of subjects, love may rule with sovereign sway;
But in a prince, on whom a nation's weal
Depends, it ill beseems to sacrifice
The good of thousands to the selfish weakness
That better fits a cottage than a throne.

Tim. Hard state of royalty! if on such terms
Timanthes must be king, take back, ye powers!
The dignity ye gave—can Heaven decree,
That public virtue never should reside
Where the soft passions dwell? Must he, whose cares
Incessant labour for the good of others,
Still want that happiness he gives to all?

Demo. And dar'st thou dress thy disobedience thus
In reason's garb, to oppose my sovereign will?
Hence every partial weakness—just resentment
Points out the way to reach thy stubborn heart:
This darling of thy soul, Ismena—she
Shall pay the forfeit—now I see full well
What caus'd thy coldness—she shall die——

Tim. O, Heaven!

Demo. Away!
Tim. Yet hear me, sir——
Demo. I've heard too much;
This day Ismena dies——
Tim. Forbid it, Heaven!
Now by yon skies——
Demo. Still dost thou linger here?
Tim. I go—but should she fall—this desperate hand——
Demo. Gods! dost thou threaten!
Tim. Force me not, my father,
To passion's wild extreme—wouldst thou preserve
The peace of thy unhappy son, preserve
His fame, his all, revoke Ismena's doom——
He answers not—that look confirms her death——
Farewell—but whither, whither shall I fly
To shun myself?—Ismena's image still
Hangs on my sight, and haunts my tortur'd soul! [*Exit.*
Demo. [*Alone.*] Where, where, Demophoon, is the mighty power
A monarch boasts, when all insult me thus?
'T is time to assert my rights——Adrastus!

Enter ADRASTUS.

Haste,
Give orders that the victim be prepar'd
This instant for the sacrifice.
Adra. Already,
Ismena, vested in the robes of death,
Expects the fatal hour—I heard the priests
Exhort her with becoming fortitude
To yield her life a sacrifice for Thrace;
While with a downcast look the virgin stood
In all the majesty of silent woe;

And now they wait thy last command alone
To bear her to the temple.

Demo. Her misfortune
Excites my pity; but her father's bold
Rebellious insults on my crown and fame,
My own repose, the glory of my realm,
Demand her death—the weal of Thrace requires
Timanthes' marriage with the Phrygian princess.
But this Timanthes never will complete
While she survives—this obstacle remov'd,
The flame of stubborn love shall soon decay,
And the rash youth, who now condemns my power,
Shall yield obedience to a parent's will [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An open part of the City. Enter TIMANTHES *and* MATHUSIUS.

Mat. And canst thou then partake Mathusius' fortune,
A willing exile from thy father's kingdom?
Think, think, my son, when thou shalt wander hence,
An obscure fugitive, will then Ismena
With chaste endearments, from thy mind erase
Remembrance of the prince? Will not the phantom
Of royalty still haunt thy lonely hours?
Wilt thou not then regret paternal wealth
Abandon'd, and a sceptre lost?

Tim. No more——
My wife and son are dearer far than all:
Each other good has no intrinsic worth;
Opinion makes it great; the tender feelings
Of father, husband, are not bred by custom,
Or early thoughts instill'd from infancy:

The seeds are in ourselves, are with us born,
Grow with our life, and but with life expire.

Mat. Yet how to set her free? Is she not now
Encompass'd by Demophoon's guards?

Tim. The care
Be mine to elude their utmost vigilance:
Assisted by some chosen friends, I'll bear
Ismena safe from danger.

Mat. Mighty powers!
Direct our flight—each moment that detains us
I'm on the rack of doubt---O! Prince, remember
To thee alone I trust my all, my last
Remains of ebbing life.

Tim. Haste then, Mathusius,
Ascend thy bark, and near yon rocks, that rise
Right of the port, expect my coming, thither;
With all the speed of love I'll bear Ismena!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

A View of an Arch leading from the City, through which the Procession for the Sacrifice appears; first the Guards, who range themselves on each Side of the Stage; then a Train of Priests and Virgins: ISMENA, *in white Vestments, supported by two Virgins, advances towards the Front of the Stage, while the following Words are sung.*——

CHORUS.

Hail, God of light! whose chearing ray
Dispels the gloom, reveals the day,
And glads the universe with all-creating sway!

SONG.—*By a* PRIEST.

To him the power, whose awful will
Trembling mortals must fulfill,
To him the dreadful altar rear,
And swell the notes till Phœbus hear!

CHORUS.

Phœbus hear!

SONG.—*By a* VIRGIN.

Sad victim! learn the stroke to brave [*To* Ismena.
That renders Heaven the life it gave,
And sheds thy blood a land to save!

CHORUS.

Hear and save!

Ism. Yet, yet, Ismena, drain the bitter dregs
Of sorrow's cup—but some few painful moments
And all may then be well!—Each step I tread
Leads me still nearer to the fated land
Where I shall rest in peace—but, O! support
My fainting sense—'tis he! whose adverse power
Directs him hither, in this hour of terror,
To shake my firm resolves!

Tim. Eyes! can it be!
Ismena, speak—what means this dreadful pomp!
Ism. At length 't is past, and ruthless death demands
It's victim—yes, Timanthes, we must part,
Demophoon has decreed my fate—even now
These ministers of Heaven receiv'd the mandate.

My soul seem'd more than half releas'd, but thou
Hast call'd her back to life—this meeting wakes
A thousand tender thoughts——
Tim. Cease, cease, Ismena,
It wakes destruction—shall I thus behold thee
Torn from my hopes—no, first——
Ism. Alas! what means
Timanthes——
Tim. Never whilst I live, this sword
That oft has mow'd my way through sanguine fields,
Shall sleep inglorious.—— [*Lays his hand on his sword.*
Ism. Ah! what wild despair
Unmans thy better sense—thou wilt but rush
On certain ruin, nor preserve my life.
Tim. It shall be so—farewell! [*Going.*
Ism. Some dreadful purpose
Hangs on thy brow—yet hear me——
Tim. Fate cuts short
Each precious moment—still I can command
A few, but trusty friends, whose blood will flow
For their Timanthes—go then—seek the temple,
I'll save thee yet, or die!
Ism. Forbid it, Heaven!
Be calm again——
Tim. Be calm!——Impossible!
Is there a power on earth—let ruin come,
If midst the wreck one treasure still is mine! [*Exit.*
Ism. Forbear—he heeds me not——Eternal powers!
Preserve him still—for me, my mind has fix'd
Its last resolve—'tis death, and death alone
Shall quickly close the scene, and ere the priest
Strike in my breast the consecrated steel,
This dagger shall prevent the unhallow'd offering!
So shall I fall a spotless wife, nor stain

The sacred altar with forbidden blood!
Yet hear me, Phœbus, still defend Timanthes,
And guard him 'midst this whirlwind of the soul!

Enter CEPHISA, *and* Attendant.

Ceph. Look, look, Clemene, view a sight to move
The breast that never felt the touch of sorrow:
Behold yon' maid, this day decreed to death,
Yet, midst this awful pomp, see with what grace
She moves, while fortitude and beauty join'd,
Proclaim her more than woman---but observe,
She sees us and approaches.

Ism. Pardon, princess,
But if I err not I behold Cephisa.

Ceph. I am indeed Cephisa.

Ism. Fame that speaks
Thy virtues, tells me, that affliction never
Will pass unpity'd by thy tender breast.

Ceph. My sympathizing heart!---Unhappy maid!
What wouldst thou? speak.

Ism. The fortune of Ismena
Who has not known? my life will soon have run
Its race of grief, this pomp proclaims me near
The wish'd-for goal, where the freed soul shall leave
Her cumberous chains---I go prepar'd to die,
Nor deprecate my fate---not for myself
I plead, but for the poor distress'd Timanthes!
To guard my life he courts his own destruction:
If e'er th' intreaties of the dying move,
Still let him find in you a kind protectress,
Prevent his rage---or, O! procure his pardon
For all the frantic deeds of wild despair.

Ceph. Ill-fated virgin! canst thou, with the shade
Of cruel death already compass'd round,

Forgetful of thyself, in generous care,
Dwell on another's safety.

Ism. Search not, princess,
Too deep my bosom's woe—but if thy goodness
Shall mediate with the king to avert those evils
Whose only fear now weighs me down to earth,
The blessings of a wretch, whose latest breath
By thee shall leave its care-worn breast in peace,
Attend thy gentle steps!

Ceph. Doubt not, Ismena,
But every good Cephisa can obtain,
Shall sooth thy parting hour—I 'll seek Cherinthus,
He, with a brother's warmest, tenderest zeal,
Shall calm the ungovern'd fury of Timanthes,
While I, on his behalf, intreat the king.

Ism. Then all is well—and now I 've not a thought
That here detains my flight—farewell! for ever——
And every happiness to me deny'd,
Be doubled on thy head—lead to the temple.

[*Exeunt* Cephisa *and Attendant.*

RECITATIVE.---*By a* PRIEST.

Now slowly lead the solemn train
To reach the grove and hallow'd fane!

Here Ismena *falls again into the order of procession, while the* Priests *and* Virgins *sing the following Chorus, as they go out.*

CHORUS.

Phœbus, to thee our choral hymn we raise,
Each year the land this sad oblation pays;
O! save at length—descend with healing grace,
And from thy scourge relieve unhappy Thrace! [Ex.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Palace. CHERINTHUS, *and* CEPHISA, *meeting.*

Cherinthus.

I 've sought, but cannot find him, yet I fear
The worst from his ungovern'd warmth—but say,
Cephisa, hast thou pleaded with the king?
Could he refuse thy suit?

Ceph. Demophoon, fix'd
In his resentment, with averted ear
Rejects the voice of pity—hark! what noise!——

Cher. A second louder yet—Ha! or I dream,
It thickens from the temple's hallow'd grove;
Adrastus comes disorder'd from the fane:
Gods! what presaging horror fills my soul!

Enter ADRASTUS.

Adra. Where, where 's the king?

Cher. What means Adrastus! whence
Those looks of fear!

Adra. The rites were now prepar'd,
And nought was wanting but Demophoon's presence,
When with a desperate band, the prince Timanthes
Broke through the guards that watch'd the portal, rush'd
With daring footsteps through the sacred dome,
Drove from the altar's foot the affrighted priests,
And seiz'd the victim—then while fell distraction
Storm'd with unlicenc'd rage, I left the temple,
And flew to bear the tidings to the king,
Who best may quell this tumult. [*Exit.*

Ceph. Wherefore stands

Cherinthus thus, when now his brother's life
Hangs on the brink of fate?

Cher. Alas! Cephisa,
I tremble at the thought—what shall I do?
Instruct me, Heaven, I 'll to yon scene of terror,
And prove what yet remains to save Timanthes!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

Outside view of a Magnificent Temple, dedicated to Apollo; *a flight of steps ascending to it—clashing of Swords is heard.—* ISMENA, *in the greatest agitation, descends from the Temple, and looks up towards* TIMANTHES *with the utmost fear and astonishment.*

Ism. Where shall I fly!——Night, stretch thy blackest wings,
And hide us from mankind—O! horror, horror!
What demon urg'd this more than frantic deed!
My love—Timanthes—Is there yet in heaven
One pitying God that hears—on me, on me!
Now let your justice fall—but spare Timanthes!
O most unhappy!

Enter TIMANTHES *from the Temple, his sword drawn.*

Tim. Where's my life?—Ismena——
Clasp'd in an husband's arms embrace thy safety.

Ism. Alas! what hast thou done?

Tim. Preserv'd Ismena!

Ism. Preserv'd! but how preserv'd?

Tim. Dispel thy fears,
Time presses—let us haste—but ha! a guard

Advances yonder—where are now my friends?
All moulder'd from me—be it so—this sword
Shall singly force thy way—— [*Going.*

Enter CHERINTHUS.

Cherinthus here!
Art thou too arm'd against me!
Cher. O! Timanthes!
Know'st thou thy brother thus? Does this bespeak
My enmity? [*Embrace.*] but haste, destruction now
Pursues thee close—I came to warn thee hence——
Demophoon is at hand.
Tim. Thou art indeed
My friend, my brother——
Cher. Linger not—away,
While I remain to appease the king's resentment.
Tim. Then let us hence—— [*Going.*

Enter on the other side, DEMOPHOON, ADRASTUS, ORCANES, Priests, *and* Guards.

Demo. Timanthes, stay!——
Tim. My father!
Demo. Perfidious boy! [Guards *prepare to surround* Ism.
Tim. Let none presume to approach,
My life shall guard Ismena.
Ism. Urge not thus
Thy fate, see Heaven itself declares against thee,
Then yield, in pity yield, and sheath thy sword.
Demo. Touch him not, guards, but give his madness way,
And let us see how far it can transport him!
Here let thy arm complete the glorious work
Thou hast but now begun, here in this bosom
Plunge deep thy steel—thou canst not tremble, traitor,

To pierce a father with the same right hand
That in their fanes has dar'd insult the gods!

Tim. Some friendly mountain, with o'erwhelming shade,
Hide me from light, and from a father's presence!

Demo. Why dost thou pause? Behold I offer here
Thy greatest foe defenceless to thy sword:
Now glut the sacred hatred, that so long
Has rankled in thy breast——let me be punish'd
For giving birth to thee—thou want'st but little
To gain the prize of envy'd wickedness;
The glorious height's in view—it but remains
To plunge thy weapon in a parent's heart,
And give thy bloody hand to her thou lov'st.

Tim. O! hold, my father, hold—those cruel words
More sharp than daggers pierce my inmost soul!
Low at your feet behold this guilty wretch,
Behold this sword, the minister of rage;
Now take it, search this breast, and free your son
From life—but, O! in pity speak not thus!

Demo. Had I not proof so glaring of his perfidy
He would seduce me——But I'll hear no more;
Yield, impious, yield, submit thy rebel hands
To slavish manacles.

Tim. [*Giving up his sword.*] Where, where, my friends,
Where are your chains? behold these ready hands,
For never shall the son refuse to obey
The mandates of a just, offended father.

Demo. Lead back the victim to the insulted god,
Ye holy priests, and slay her in my presence.

[Guards *prepare to seize her*, Timanthes *snatches a sword from one of them.*

Tim. He dies that touches her—Off, off, ye slaves!——

Demo. Disarm him, guards! [Tim. *is disarmed.*

Tim. [*To* Ismena.] I can no more defend thee!
My king! my father!
Demo. Leave me!
Ism. Yet, Demophoon,
Thou may'st, without resentment, hear the suit
Ismena makes, who, fearless, thus steps forth
To welcome death—but, O! forgive the prince,
Whose partial warmth to assist a wretch's cause,
The glorious weakness of heroic minds,
Impell'd him to this fatal deed—behold
What deep contrition now o'erspreads his soul;
Hear then my last, my only prayer; complete
The unfinish'd rites—lead me to sacrifice,
And bless me with oblivion!
Demo. I must praise
Thy generous fortitude—yes, hapless maid,
Did not the powers profan'd demand atonement,
My pity yet might save—but duty here,
And fame forbid—conduct her to the temple.
Tim. Shall it be said I saw Ismena slain!
At least defer her fate——hear, reverend priests,
My father, hear!——Ismena cannot be
The victim now requir'd—the sacrifice
Would prove a profanation.
Demo. Ha! what mean'st thou!
Tim. What does the god demand?
Demo. A virgin's blood.
Tim. Ismena must not then be led to death,
She 's wedded—she 's a mother—she 's my wife!
Demo. What do I hear! suspend the rites, are these
The hopes I vainly form'd, perfidious son!
Respect'st thou thus divine and human laws,
And dost thou comfort thus thy father's age?

Ism. O, mighty king! before your sacred feet
Behold the cause of all—then from Timanthes
Avert your wrath, and let Ismena bear
The punishment; 'tis I, and I alone
Am guilty—think that I, with artful wiles,
Seduc'd him first to love, that I enforc'd him
With frequent tears to these forbidden nuptials.

Tim. Believe it not—she did not—no, by Heaven,
The deed was mine alone—with all the warmth
Of unremitted love I still pursued her:
A thousand times she banish'd me her sight,
As often I return'd—I vow'd, entreated,
But all in vain; till, frantic with despair
I menac'd with a desperate hand my life.

Cher. O! sir, if e'er you held Cherinthus dear,
Let me now plead, nor plead in vain his pardon:
Extend your royal grace, and O! restore
To me a brother, to yourself a son.

Demo. What means this softnesss that unmans me thus?
Away———

Ism. Yet hear, my lord—methinks I see
Compassion dawning—O! look there, shall he,
Who once was all your joy, now fail to move
A father's pity?—Is he not your son?
Were not his infant years your darling hope?
Oft have I heard that, when in arms array'd,
You sought the foe, you press'd his lips to yours,
And, when you came victorious from the field,
His tender kiss first welcom'd your return.

Demo. No more—I feel the mingled agony
Of struggling passions labouring in my breast!
But O! Demophoon—think thou art a king,
And let that thought confirm thee—yes, my soul,

Be greatly wretched, but be greatly just!——
Orcanes, see that these be kept apart——
Cherinthus, let us hence, while to the temple
These ministers of Heaven retire to appease
The angry powers!——

[*Exeunt, on one side,* Demophoon, Cherinthus, Adrastus, *and part of the* Guards, *while the* Priests *ascend the steps, and enter the temple.*]

Ism. And must Ismena prove
The bane of him whom more than life she loves?
Is wretchedness the dowry which she brings?

Tim. What shall I answer thee?——I cannot speak!
These matchless proofs of unexampled love
But fix new scorpions here!——Have I not murder'd
Thy peace, thy all——heap'd anguish and disgrace
On him who bred my youth to fame and greatness?
Good old Mathusius——

Ism. There indeed I feel
Distress anew—my father!——

Tim. Now elate
With hope, he waits your coming, but in vain
The ready bark expects its lovely freight,
Which, but for me, had hence been borne in safety.
'T was I oppos'd your flight—I fondly thought
That even the stern Demophoon must behold
My lov'd Ismena with a husband's eyes.

Ism. Forbear to chide thyself—and Heaven forbid
My thoughts should e'er reproach thee with the sufferings
That fate decrees us—yet thy words have rais'd
New scenes of tenderness—methinks I see
Mathusius, with a trembling heart, cast round
His longing looks, while, as the wasting hour
Declines, his fears increase, till his poor bosom
Throbs with an anxious father's sharpest pangs.

Tim. Think not I can forget his suffering age——
Some messenger shall to his ear convey
This day's events—Timanthes still has friends
That love their prince, and feel for his misfortunes.
Orc. My lord, Arsetes with dispatch shall bear
Your tidings to Mathusius, this the king
Forbids not, and whate'er Orcanes can,
Which duty may permit, attends your will.
Tim. I thank thee, good Orcanes—lead me now
To obey the king's command—farewell, Ismena,
And every guardian power descend to save us!
Ism. Still, still, I fear, but stand prepar'd for all——
Yet one reflection sheds a healing balm
On my torn mind, to think I may again
Hang on his reverend neck—O! thou whose goodness
Shalt bear Timanthes' greeting to Mathusius,
Hear now a daughter's voice—tell him, Ismena
Waits with a fond impatience to behold
His venerable face, while join'd to mine
His cheeks shall mingle sorrows, as his lips
Pronounce their blessing, and confirm my pardon,
For every anguish that his age endures.
Tim. Thou brightest excellence——and shall not Heaven
Protect that virtue it inspir'd---my soul
Revives with hope---we yet may meet again——
Mathusius shall return; who knows what here
His presence may avail---all, all shall join
To win Demophoon's grace——once more, farewell
My life——Ismena——— [*Embrace.*
Ism. Words are poor to speak
The tumult struggling here---let this speak for me
And sum up all in silence. [*Embrace.*
Yes—he 's gone! [*Exit* Timanthes *guarded.*

And as his parting resolution now
Ebbs out apace, while in its stead a crowd
Of tender images——wife! daughter! mother!
Olinthus——O! that lov'd idea still
Clings round my heart—but look, Cephisa comes
Once more to share in sufferings not her own!

Enter CEPHISA.

Ceph. Art thou Ismena, she for whom so late
My bosom bled! And may I now believe
The mouth of fame that speaks thee yet more wretched
Than when I saw thee led to death, that speaks
Of secret nuptials, of a broken union,
And all the woes that wait thy hapless love?

Ism. Alas! Cephisa, I am one whom fortune
Has singled for her frowns, one whom in vain
The hand of goodness would preserve from ruin;
Whom even Cephisa's pity cannot save——
And yet, too generous princess——

Ceph. No, Ismena,
As yet perhaps all is not lost—the power
That watches o'er the unhappy still may hear thee:
Demophoon has confess'd that nature's plea
Is strongly for Timanthes, that his soul
Is rent with passions, while by turns the judge,
By turns the father sways: the public eye
Confirm'd the wavering king; but now, retir'd
Within himself, the parent must prevail.
Then speak, O speak, and ease thy swelling heart,
Methinks I see distraction labouring there!
And as but now thy eyes encounter'd mine,
The tear, that stood till then suppress'd, gush'd forth,

Gave words to all the pangs a wife can feel,
To all a mother's anguish.
Ism. Thou hast touch'd me
Too nearly there—I am indeed a mother——
Here, here his image dwells—and O! Cephisa,
Could I but hope, and yet I wrong thy virtues,
We have a son, the dear, the only offspring
Of our ill-omen'd loves—his innocence,
Alas! is guiltless of his parent's deeds——
Could I but once more clasp him to my breast——
Thy goodness might entreat the king——
Ceph. And will
Ismena—yes, by all the virtuous grief
Of sympathy, when for another's woe
The generous bosom feels, I'll seek Demophoon,
And urge thy suit with friendship's kindest warmth.
Perhaps yet more—but rest assur'd, Ismena,
Thus much at least Cephisa can obtain,
To give thy little fondling to thy arms,
To shed soft comfort on thy lonely hours,
To calm thy troubled breast and sooth thy cares! [*Exit.*
Ism. Conduct me now, where I may patient wait
What yet remains to suffer, while I count
Each tardy moment till Olinthus comes!
And he will come—Cephisa has pronounc'd it——
My heart already meets him—lead me, friends,
To prison!—no—the mind, still uncontroul'd,
Knows no confinement—to a place of sorrow!
O! no—that cannot be, when my Olinthus,
Love's dearest pledge, shall smile away distress
Even in the dungeon's gloom—the thought alone
Wings my rapt soul, and lightens every pain! [*Exit guarded.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Prison. ISMENA *seated,* OLINTHUS *asleep by her, and Attendant.*

Ismena.

ALREADY hush'd in slumber! O! sleep on,
Dear guiltless babe! these rugged walls to thee,
Are as the costly arras that surrounds
A prince's chamber, and the solemn clank
Of these rude chains, is as the music's note
To lull thee to thy rest—Where is my love,
My lord, Timanthes? Gracious powers! assist him,
And reconcile his soul to life and happiness!
He must, he shall—but look, Ianthe, see
My poor Olinthus smiles—blest omen sure
Of his lov'd father's fortune—happy state,
Of childish innocence—ha! smile again!
Thou dear resemblance of thy hapless sire,
His little self!—O! I could gaze for ever,
Till all the mother wakening in my soul,
Would fix me down to life, to life and thee!

Enter DEMOPHOON *and* CEPHISA.

Ceph. Behold, Demophoon, where reclin'd she hangs
O'er her young son; the silent mourner weeps
In heart-felt anguish—claims not this the tear
Of sympathizing sorrow?

Demo. Yes, Cephisa,
My breast has caught th' infection—and behold,
Lost in herself she heeds us not, do thou
Speak comfort to her woes.

Ceph. [*Going towards* Ismena.] Ismena——

Ism. Ha!

Cephisa!—like some guardian spirit still
Thou hover'st round me—yet can grief retire,
Where goodness such as thine will not pursue?
To thee a mother owes this dear embrace!
But O! what do I see, Demophoon here!
Ah! sir, what means this visit? Com'st thou now
To give my sorrows peace? 'Tis but a moment
That severs life and wretchedness, and, oh!
Would the same lips that seal Ismena's doom,
Restore Timanthes to a father's love,
To life---to pardon—— [*Kneels.*

Demo. Rise——

Ism. Still let me kneel,
'Tis for Timanthes---wherefore dost thou turn
Thy face to hide the starting tear---O! think
You see him banish'd from a father's sight,
A wretched prisoner---yet you answer not——
O, speak!---Olinthus!—look he wakes---Ianthe,
Haste, bring him, he shall plead his father's cause:
Come, little suppliant; see, Demophoon, see,
Mark but his looks, they cannot plead in vain——
He is your own, whate'er his mother's guilt,
Your royal blood flows in his infant veins,
Think that in him your once-lov'd son implores,
And in Olinthus now behold Timanthes.

Demo. This is too much---O! rise---my daughter rise,
And in a parent's arms forget thy sufferings.

Ism. What do I hear!

Demo. Thy virtues have aton'd
For all that 's past---Timanthes shall again

Be thine—Olinthus too—at once we 'll bless
The husband and the father.

Ceph. Why, Ismena,
Art thou still silent—see'st thou not that Heaven
Crowns every hope Cephisa wish'd to raise?
And dost thou yet distrust the flattering scene?
Dispel thy doubts——

Ism. And shall I then forget
These dreams of grief and terror!—let us leave
In these abodes the phantoms of despair,
And haste to life, to rapture, and Timanthes! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Another part of the Prison. TIMANTHES *alone.*

Tim. Why should we covet life? What are its charms,
Since all decrees are wretched? Every state
Partakes of misery: in infancy
We tremble at a frown; in ripening youth
We 're made the sport of fortune and of love:
In age we groan beneath the weight of years:
Now we 're tormented with the thirst of gain,
And now the fear of loss: eternal war,
The wicked with themselves maintain; the just
With fraud and envy; all our schemes are shadow,
Vain and illusive as a sick man's dream;
And when we but begin at last to know
Our life's whole folly, death cuts short the scene.

Enter CHERINTHUS.

Cher. Where is my friend, my brother! [*Embrace.*

Tim. Ha! Cherinthus,

Are these the tears due to a brother's death,
When thus you press me with a last embrace?

Cher. What last embrace, what tears, what death, Timanthes?

Still live, and still be bless'd—these hands shall loose
Thy galling chains, these lips shall breathe the sound
Of life and happiness.

Tim. Is't possible!

Cher. Our father now relents; the holy priests
With due libations have appeas'd the powers,
And purg'd the fane from sacrilegious guilt:
A powerful advocate asserts thy cause——

Tim. What tongue will plead for me, a wretched outcast
Of Heaven and earth!

Cher. Cephisa——

Tim. Ha! Cephisa!
She whom my scorn offended!

Cher. Not alone
For thee she pleads—She pleads Ismena's cause———

Tim. For my Ismena!—breath of gods inspire
Her lips with eloquence!—O! my Cherinthus!
Should Heaven propitious now—but O! I feel
A father's anguish here—couldst thou for me
Discharge his promise to the Phrygian king,
Give, in my stead, thy hand to fair Cephisa.

Cher. I own my soul has long ador'd Cephisa;
I love her with the tenderest passion; yet
I must not hope the princess e'er will deign
To accept my hand: thou know'st she came to wed
The kingdom's heir——

Tim. Is this the only bar?
Then she is yours—I here renounce my claim
To Thrace, to empire.

Cher. Whither would Timanthes!

Tim. Away, and seek the king; tell him Cherinthus
Will from dishonour save the Thracian name:
O! fly, and with a brother's speed return;
My all depends on this eventful hour! [*Exit* Cher.
Indulgent power! methinks my heart dilates
With new-reviving joy! shall I once more
Without a pang embrace my wife and son!

Enter MATHUSIUS, *with a Paper.*

Mat. Timanthes! O! ill-fated prince!

Tim. Mathusius;
Thou know'st not what has chanc'd; the pitying hand
Of Heaven even yet may save us, bring once more
Thy daughter to my arms———

Mat. Forbid it, nature,
That thou shouldst e'er embrace Ismena more!

Tim. What means Mathusius?—speak——

Mat. Fate has unveil'd
A dreadful secret—and Ismena———

Tim. Ha!
Say, what of her?

Mat. She is—Timanthes' sister.

Tim. My sister!—what delusion——

Mat. No, Timanthes,
Too certain are the proofs.

Tim. 'T is madness all———
Take heed, old man, my love can brook but ill
The dreams of doting age.

Mat. Unhappy youth!
Hear then the dreadful tale!—when late for flight
I gather'd all my treasures to the shore,
I found a casket, that had lain conceal'd

E'er since I lost the partner of my bed:
Doubtless thou oft hast heard Barcene bore
Such faithful friendship to the queen deceas'd,
Our king's first consort, that the day which saw
Argea's death beheld Barcene's too.
Tim. I know it well———
Mat. This casket by Argea
Was trusted to Barcene, which contain'd
This paper, written by the queen's own hand.
Tim. What paper? ha!———
Mat. Now mark the fatal scroll! [*Reads.*
'Ismena is not daughter to Mathusius,
'But owes her birth to me and to Demophoon,
'By what event her fortune has been chang'd,
'Another mystic paper must disclose;
'Let this be sought for in the houshold temple,
'Beneath the footstool of the god.
ARGEA.'
Tim. Imposture all!——
Mat. Behold the royal signet—— [*Gives the paper.*
Tim. What say'st thou!—Oh!—— [*Drops the paper.*
Mat. My prince!——
Tim. Away, Mathusius!
Mat. I dare not leave thee thus——
Tim. I charge thee hence,
Thou minister of fate—haste to the temple,
And open all this tale of guilt and horror!
Mat. Yes, I must go—but O! ye pitying powers,
Look down, and send some messenger of peace
To guard him in this hour of dreadful trial. [*Exit.*
Tim. [*Alone.*] Heaven hears him not—a night of black despair
For ever wraps me round—Olinthus now

Nephew and son! Ismena wife and sister!
Detested union! horrible to thought!——
Fly, fly, Timanthes, hide thee from mankind,
Thou now must prove thy father's curse—behold
The furies here reviv'd of Thebes and Argos!
O! that these eyes had never seen Ismena!
What then I deem'd the violence of love
Was nature's secret force—what sound was that!

Enter DEMOPHOON *and* CHERINTHUS.

My father!—hide me, earth!——
Demo. My dearest son,
In these lov'd arms——
Tim. Forbear—no more Demophoon
Must call Timanthes by that tender name.
Demo. Perhaps thou know'st not——
Tim. O! I know too much——
Demo. I come to chace the clouds of black despair—
Thy faults are now forgiven—and once again
Ismena shall be thine——Still art thou silent!
Receive this dear embrace, thy pledge of pardon——
But say—why dost thou fly thy father's sight?
Tim. I dare not look on thee———

Enter ISMENA, OLINTHUS, *and Attendant.*

Ism. My lord, my husband!
Tim. Away, and leave me.
Ism. Ha! what means my love!
Are we not one? Has not relenting fate
Unravell'd all our sorrows?—this blest hour
Indulgent Heaven restores thee to Ismena,
And dost thou welcome thus———
Tim. Oh!———

Demo. Speak, Timanthes———

Tim. I cannot speak—Ah! whither shall I fly
To hide———

Demo. Whom fly'st thou from?

Tim. From men and gods!
From you and from myself—to solitude,
Where my remembrance may be lost for ever!

Cher. 'Tis frenzy all!—Hast thou forgot each name
That wakes the soul to tenderness—behold
Thy brother here, thy son——

Ism. Behold thy wife,
Who thus adjures thee by each thought, that now
Should fill thy breast, to hear and pity her!
Or if thy wife must plead in vain, yet hear
In this poor innocent the voice of nature.
What has he done, that thou shouldst cast him off?
He never could offend—why dost thou shun
His harmless looks?—O! take him to thy bosom——
Now, by this hand, you shall not wrest it from me—
Once the dear pledge of happiness——

Tim. No more——
Thou rend'st my heart—wife, father, son, and brother,
Are names of transport to a mind at ease;
To me they 're sounds of horror!—take, O! take
That infant from my sight—his presence starts
A thousand dreadful thoughts—art thou not chang'd?
Dost thou not shudder?—Hear then, wretched woman!
Thou art—I cannot speak it——O, Ismena! [*Exit.*

Ism. Stay, stay, Timanthes, if I must be wretched,
Thy lips shall seal my doom——

Demo. Cherinthus, go———
Pursue thy brother's steps, and learn the cause
Of this mysterious grief—— [*Exit* Cher.

Ism. And is he gone?
Did he not cast me from his lov'd embrace?
Did he not spurn Olinthus from his arms?
Some horrid secret!——O! what art thou, great
Mysterious evil! that in darkness hid,
Gives double terror—but I'll seek Timanthes,
Nor leave him till I share in all he suffers!

[*Exeunt* Ism. Olin. *and Attendant.*

Enter ADRASTUS.

Adra. The sacred pontiff now requests your presence,
To meet Mathusius in the houshold temple,
On some important business that regards
Your house's honour, and the kingdom's weal.

Demo. To meet Mathusius!—let us hence, Adrastus,
And learn what yet remains for suffering Thrace. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Palace. Enter TIMANTHES *and* CHERINTHUS.

Tim. Away, Cherinthus—wilt thou follow still
These steps accurst—What wouldst more of horror?
Leave, leave me to my woes——

Cher. O! yield not thus
To madness of despair—thou art indeed
Unhappy, but the hand of fate alone
Has driven thee down this precipice of ruin;
Thy blameless thoughts———

Tim. No more, no more, Cherinthus,
Nought can extenuate——have I not destroy'd
A father's peace, and stain'd a royal race
With blackest infamy——by horrid love

Impell'd, did I not trample on the laws,
And leap the bound, that seem'd by Heaven design'd
To stop the dreadful union——has not rage
Urg'd these destructive hands—hold, hold, reflection——
Incest and sacrilege———

Cher. Now by the love
You bear Cherinthus, by those awful powers
That view the soul's recess, whose justice marks
The deed of hood-wink'd fate from the black dye
Of voluntary guilt, whose pity still
May sooth thy future life———

Tim. My future life!———
Shall I then live to aggravate my crime!
To love——for, O! with horror I confess
I cannot shake Ismena from my soul——
Here, here she dwells—nor can this awful moment
Raze from my breast the husband and the father,
It will not be—one way—— [*Draws a dagger.*

Cher. Hold, hold, my brother——
What wouldst thou do?

Mat. [*Within.*] Give, give him to my arms——

Enter MATHUSIUS.

Timanthes! my Timanthes! Oh!—— [*Embrace.*

Tim. Mathusius!
Why wilt thou save a wretch that must not live?
Away———

Mat. O! thou art innocent—Demophoon
Gave thee not birth—but I—I am thy father——

Tim. Thou!—gracious Heaven! Is not Ismena then
My sister --Speak, Mathusius——

Ism. [*Entering.*] Let me fly
To greet him with the sound of love and joy.

Enter ISMENA, CEPHISA, *and* OLINTHUS.

Yes, I will hold him ever to my heart!
Timanthes! 'tis too much---hence every vain
And busy fear that frights thee from my arms!
No sister now---no rigid laws oppose
Our union more; Demophoon has confirm'd
Our mutual bliss, and universal Thrace
Shall now be witness to my boundless love!

Tim. And is it given me then to clasp thee thus!
To gaze with guiltless transport!---speak, my friends,
It cannot be---o'erwhelm'd but now with horrors——

Enter DEMOPHOON *with a Paper, and* ADRASTUS.

O, royal sir! and may I then believe
These blest events---and is Ismena sprung
From your illustrious race---and may I now
Indulge the fond idea———

Demo. Yes, Timanthes,
This has unravell'd all---from yonder fane
I bring this scroll, which has dispell'd the fears
Which first Mathusius raised.

Tim. All-gracious Heaven!

Demo. Thou wert exchang'd an infant for Ismena;
Argea, baffled in her hopes to give
An heir to Thrace, first by Arsene's birth,
And next Ismena's, from Mathusius' wife
Receiv'd, and gave thee to me as her own;
But verging on the brink of life, she left
A paper with Barcene, to produce,
If aught of danger should attend Ismena,
That paper which Mathusius gave thee first,

While in the houshold temple she dispos'd
This second scroll which has reveal'd thy birth.
Tim. Then am I happy still---O! sacred sir!
Forgive each rebel act---but 't was a cause
Might surely plead---'t was your Ismena——
Demo. Rise,
Come to my arms, and be again my son;
This cancels all—— [*Embrace.*
Ceph. [*Leading* Olinthus *to him.*] See, see, Timanthes, one
Who claims your dearest care---behold him now——
Look how he reaches out his little hands
To clasp a father's knees, and meet his blessing.
Tim. Thy mother's joy!---Olinthus——
Ism. Yes, Timanthes,
It is Olinthus, whom but late you spurn'd
From your embrace---you spurn'd Ismena too———
And will you shun me still—no, no, Timanthes,
I have thee here—my beating heart confesses
Its wonted guest—O! we will part no more!
Our sufferings past shall be the grateful theme
Of many a future hour—Olinthus oft
Shall listen to our talk, and while he dwells
With infant wonder on his parents' story,
Drop the young tear of pity from his eye,
Cling to our breasts, and pay for all our sorrows.
Tim. [*To* Cher.] My brother! still that tender name is ours,
'T was doubtless Heaven inspir'd me to resign
The birthright I usurp'd—receive thy own.
Mat. Take back, my fate, what now remains of life,
For nothing more is worth an old man's care?
Demo. Mathusius, yes—thou still hast days of joy:
Here let oblivion's veil conceal the past;

We both have been to blame---see in Timanthes
The innocent usurper: thus we stand
Deliver'd from the annual sacrifice;
Cherinthus shall succeed---in him, Cephisa,
Behold the kingdom's heir---but this glad hour
Demands that tribute which the tongue of praise
Owes to that ruling Power who governs all!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

Written by GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.---Spoken by Mrs. BULKLEY.

WHAT horrors fill the tragic poet's brain!
Plague, murder, rape, and incest crowd his train;
He pants for miseries, delights in ills,
The blood of fathers, mothers, children, spills;
Stabs, poisons, massacres; and in his rage,
With daggers, bowls, and carpets, strews the stage.

Our gentler poet, in soft opera bred,
Italian crotchets singing in his head,
Winds to a prosp'rous end the fine drawn tale,
And roars—but roars like any nightingale.

Woman, whate'er she be—maid, widow, wife,
A quiet woman is the charm of life:
And sure Cephisa was a gentle creature,
Full of the milk and honey of good nature.
Imported for a spouse—by spouse refus'd!
Was ever maid so shamefully abus'd?
And yet, alas, poor prince! I could not blame him—
One wife, I knew, was full enough to tame him.
Ismena, and Timanthes, and Olinthus,
Might all be happy—for I chose Cherinthus.

But what a barb'rous law was this of Thrace!
How cruel there *was each young lady's case!*
A virgin, plac'd upon the dreadful roll,
A hapless virgin must have stood the poll,

But by Timanthes made a lucky bride,
Ismena prudently disqualify'd.

Ladies, to you alone our author sues;
'Tis yours to cherish, or condemn his muse.
The theatre's a mirror, and each play
Should be a very looking-glass, they say:
His looking-glass reflects no moles or pimples,
But shews you full of graces, smiles, and dimples.
If you approve yourselves, resolve to spare,
And, critics! then attack him, if ye dare.

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THE END.

THE

CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

A

COMEDY.

BY MISS LEE.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the Direction of,
GEORGE CAWTHORN, British Library, STRAND.

MDCCXCVI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE aversion a woman ought to feel at the necessity of engaging even in a literary contest, has induced me to endure a variety of imputations; yet, to publish a piece, and leave all unanswered, might at once give a sanction to the past, and encourage future slanders: ---Let this plead my excuse for introducing myself to those who have so generous received a Comedy I would wish more worthy their patronage.

Charged early in life with the care of a family, I accompanied my father eight years ago into the rules of a prison, where the perjury of an enemy, and the injustice of a judge for a time confined him. To amuse some of my melancholy leisure, I there (from a fondness for Marmontel's beautiful tale of Lauretta) first conceived the design of introducing into the drama a female heart, capable of frailty, yet shuddering at vice, and perhaps sufficiently punished in her own feelings. A lover, whose error was likewise in his heart, not head; and even for him I contrived a chastisement in the agony of losing her: nor did I imagine, in adopting a religious tenet, I could ever be accused of offending morality. Subsequent characters and incidents arose in the manner they now appear, except that the governor had then no place in it. It is now seven years since the piece was brought thus forward; soon after which a friend lent me a translation of Monsieur Diderot's Pere de Famille.---This fine performance gave me infinite pleasure under all the disadvantages of a translation; and the chance-similitude which now and then occurred between that and mine, rather flattered than grieved me, since, conscious of my own originality, and imagining even my worst enemy, if he charged me with a plagiarism, would at least allow, while the subject was new to our stage, my only crime was in denying it.---I returned the translated play, and mine lay dormant several years. Sentiment was now exploded, and I therefore sought to diversify it with humour. The character of the austere Commander in Monsieur Diderot's play, had particularly pleased me; and not being mistress of the French language, I sought in vain for a translation, on purpose to interweave him into mine. Not able to meet with any, I created the character of Governor Harcourt,

(whose chief likeness to the French uncle is in name) and heightened the piece with every event relative to him: but an unbounded partiality I must ever retain for music made me finish it as a three act opera.

In the interim my father had been engaged as a capital actor, by Mr. Harris. Life opened gradually upon me, and dissipated the illusions of imagination. I learnt that merit merely is a very insufficient recommendation to managers in general; and as I had neither a prostituted pen or person to offer Mr. Harris, I gave up, without a trial, all thoughts of the drama, and sought an humble home in Bath, resolving to bury in my own heart its little talent, and be a poor any thing, rather than a poor author. Some valuable friends, I had long possessed there, insisted I should be wanting to myself in consigning this piece voluntarily to oblivion, and offered me a recommendation to Mr. Harris, with a promise of concealing my name, unless it was accepted. I could desire nothing more: and under these circumstances it was put into that gentleman's hands above a twelvemonth ago. The praises he gave it, induced my friend to own my name, and from that moment (let his conscience tell him why) it sunk in Mr. Harris's favour. He said he had frequently refused a play of Mr. Macklin's, taken from Le Pere de Famille, and could not accept another on the same subject; insisted, that the serious part of mine was all Diderot's; advised me to cut it entirely out, and convert the humorous part into an after-piece, which he would bring out in the course of the season.---Reasons very remote from the stage could alone induce me to listen a moment to his proposal, and those brought me a hundred miles to converse with him on the subject; when he produced me the copy sent him, so worn out and dirty, that I had reason to conclude he had lent it to every one he knew, at least.---I was enough mistress of myself to listen with complaisance to the most supercilious and unmeaning criticisms, and agreed to mutilate it according to his ideas. The actors were now named. I had every reason to imagine it a settled thing; and returning to Bath, sent the reduced copy at the appointed time, viz. early in September. A month elapsed without my even knowing he had received it; when, with the continued ill-manners of addressing me by a third person, (for he never wrote a single line in answer to several letters) I was shewn a paragraph from Mr. Harris by the friend already mentioned, importing, that I "had sent him *four* acts instead of *two*, and must still take away half; adding that he advised me by all means to retain my own, disregarding Diderot's." I did retain my own; for, as the manuscript was luckily returned for another alteration, I thought it time to consider what was due

to myself, and that the character of mildness and complacency would be rather dearly bought if I gave up all merit for it; I therefore wrote him a civil letter, and finally withdrew it.

I shall not expatiate on this treatment. I was perhaps in some degree blameable, for believing that man would set any value on my time or my money, who knew not the value of his own; nay, I may be in reality obliged to him in one sense, since his acceptance of my comedy would inevitably have consigned to oblivion those parts of it honoured with the most lavish applause.

What pleasure do I feel in retracting the general aspersion cast upon managers, when I speak of Mr. Colman---Obliged to get the piece represented, if possible, lest the subject should be borrowed (an evil too common of late) I enclosed it with an anonymous letter to that gentleman, briefly relating these particulars, and it was left at his house early in the year, by an unknown person. At the expiration of a fortnight the manuscript or his answer was demanded, and the latter by this means rendered both impartial and decisive. Mr. Colman thought the general name of Author entitled to the compliment of his own hand-writing; and, by a flattering opinion, and immediate acceptance of my piece, encouraged me to avow myself. By his advice I cut out the songs, and lengthened it into five acts. Nor did his kindness end there. He gave me the benefit of his judgment and experience, both in heightening and abbreviating the business, with every attention in casting and getting it up; generously uniting to the name of Manager that of Friend. Mr. Colman has brought into notice a woman who will ever with pride and pleasure acknowledge the obligation.

Sept. 30, 1780.

TO MRS. P——.

Oh, thou, who bad'st me fearless seize the oar,
And launch uncertain on life's flatt'ring sea;
With trembling hand impell'd my bark from shore,
While wond'ring at thy own temerity:

Nameless, as are thy merits, still remain,
Yet let thy heart appropriate all its dues,
And oh! whate'er th' event, do thou retain
The tender titles of my friend and muse!

Should Fortune's fav'rites, circling close her throne,
And Fame's loud trump be mute to me alone,
The pity of the world I can return,
And still at unsuccessful fiction spurn;
While Heaven's supreme indulgence gives to me,
Its charms combin'd, and realiz'd in thee!

PROLOGUE.

Written by GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.---Spoken by Mr. PALMER.

LONG has the passive stage, howe'er absurd,
Been rul'd by names, *and govern'd by a* word.
Some poor cant term, *like magic spells, can awe,*
And bind our realms, like a dramatic law.
When Fielding, Humour's fav'rite child, appear'd,
Low *was the word—a word each author fear'd!*
Till chas'd at length, by Pleasantry's bright ray,
Nature and Mirth resum'd their legal sway;
And Goldsmith's genius bask'd in open day.

No beggar, howe'er poor, a cur can lack;
Poor bards, of critic curs, can keep a pack.
One yelper silenc'd, twenty barkers rise,
And with new howls, *their* snarlings *still disguise.*
Low *banish'd, the word* sentiment *succeeds;*
And at their shrine the modern play-wright bleeds.
Hard fate! but let each wou'd-be critic know,
That sentiments *from genuine feelings flow.*
Critics in vain declaim, and write, and rail:
Nature, eternal Nature! will prevail.
Give me the bard, who makes me laugh and cry,
Diverts and moves, and all, I scarce know why!
Untaught by commentators, French or Dutch,
Passion still answers to th' electric touch.
Reason, like Falstaff, claims, when all is done,
The honours of the field already won.

To-night, our author's is a mixt intent———
Passion and humour—low *and* sentiment:
Smiling in tears—a serio-comic play——
Sunshine and show'r—a kind of April Day!
A Lord, whose pride is in his honour plac'd;
A Governor, with av'rice not disgrac'd;
An humble Priest! a Lady and a Lover
So full of virtue, some of it runs over.
No temporary touches, no allusions
To camps, reviews, and all our late confusions;
No personal reflections, no sharp satire,
But a mere chapter from the book of Nature.
Wrote by a woman too! the muses now
Few liberties to naughty men allow;
But like old maids on earth, resolv'd to vex,
With cruel coyness treat the other sex.

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

	Men.
WOODVILLE,	Mr. Holman.
Lord GLENMORE,	Mr. Harley.
Governor HARCOURT,	Mr. Munden.
Captain HARCOURT,	Mr. Macready.
GREY,	Mr. Hull.
VANE,	Mr. Bernard.
JACOB,	Mr. Knight.

	Women.
CECILIA,	Miss Wallis.
Miss MORTIMER,	Miss Chapman.
Mrs. WARNER,	Mrs. Platt.
BRIDGET,	Mrs. Knight.

Scene, *London*---Time, *Twenty-four Hours.*

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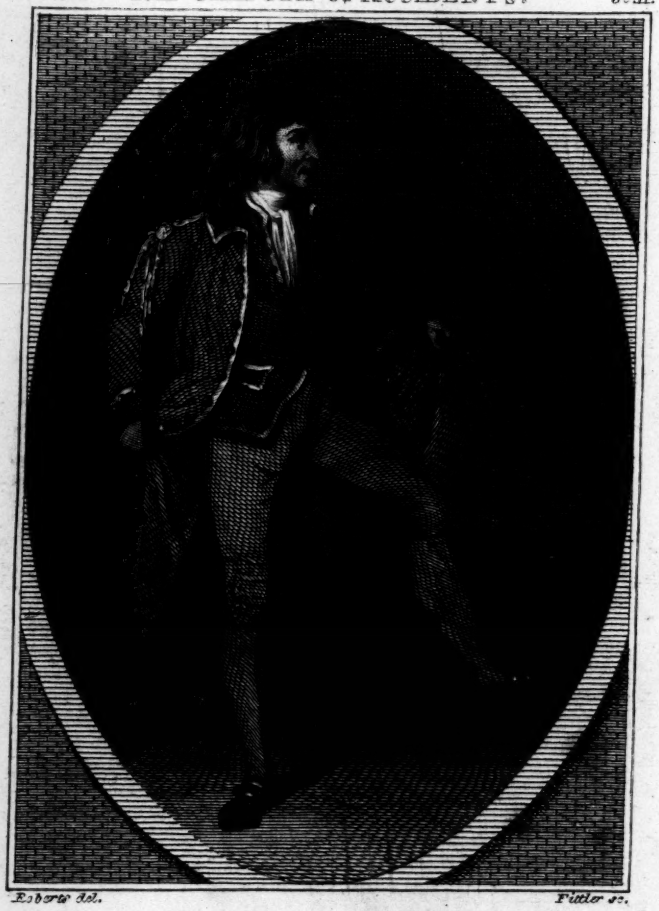
Act III. THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS. Sc. II.



Roberts del. Fittler sc.

Mr. KNIGHT as JACOB.

Jacob — and danzing all round the room, zoa. —

London, Printed for G. Cawthorn, British Library, Strand, Feb. 17. 98

Graham del. Wilson sc.

London Printed for G. Cawthorn British Library. Strand Feb. 28. 98.

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THE

CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Hall. VANE *enters in a Riding-Dress, and a* Footman.

Vane.

RUN, and tell Mrs. Warner my lord is at hand; and bid the butler send me a bottle of hock. [*Throws himself along the hall chairs, wiping his forehead.*]—Phew! the months have jumbled out of their places, and we have July in September.

Mrs. WARNER *enters.*

Mrs. *War.* Servant, Mr. Vane.

Vane. Ah! my dear creature! how have you done these fifty ages?

Mrs. *War.* Why, methinks you are grown mighty grand, or you would have come to the still-room to ask. Will you choose any chocolate?

Vane. Why, do n't you see I am dead?—absolutely dead; and, if you was to touch me, I should shake to mere dust like an Egyptian mummy. Because it was not provoking enough to lounge away a whole summer in the country, here am I

driven up to town as if the devil was at my heels, in the shape of our hopeful heir; who has neither suffered my lord nor me to rest one moment, through his confounded impatience to see his uncle.

Mrs. *War.* Umph—he,'ll have enough of the old gentleman presently. He is the very model of my poor dear lady, his sister, who never was at peace herself, nor suffered any one else to be so. Such a house as we have had ever since he came!—Why, he is more full of importance and airs than a bailiff in possession;—and hectors over Miss Mortimer, till she almost keeps her chamber to avoid him.

Vane. Hates Miss Mortimer!—Why, here 'll be the devil to pay about her, I suppose!

Mrs. *War.* Hate her! ay, that he does. He looked as if he could have killed her, the moment she came down to see him; and got into his chamber presently after, where he sends for me.—'Who is this young woman, Mrs. What's your name?' says he. 'Why, sir,' says I, 'she is the orphan of a Colonel Mortimer, whose intimacy with my lord,' says I——'Pho, pho,' says he, 'all that I know, woman; what does she do in this house?' says he; his face wrinkling all over, like cream, when it's skimming. 'Why, sir,' says I, 'her father unluckily died, just before the Duke his brother, and so could not leave her one shilling of all that fine fortune; and so my lord intends to marry her to Mr. Woodville,' says I.——'He does?' cries he; 'Heaven be praised, I'm come in time to mar that dainty project, however. You may go, woman, and tell Miss I do n't want any thing more to-night.' So up goes I to Miss Mortimer, and tells her all this. Lord! how glad she was to find he intended to break the match, though she can't guess what he means.

Vane. Upon my soul, I think it is full as hard to guess what she means. What the devil will not my lord's title,

fortune, and only son, be a great catch for a girl without a friend or a shilling?

Mrs. *War.* Ay; but I could tell you a little story would explain all.——You must know——

[*Sitting down; a loud knocking.*

Vane. [*Starts up.*] Zounds, here's my lord!

[*Exeunt, confusedly.*

SCENE II.

An Antichamber. Lord GLENMORE *and the* GOVERNOR *meet; the latter hobbling.*

L. *Glen.* You are welcome to England, brother! I am sorry your native air pays you so ill a compliment, after sixteen years absence.

Gov. Faith, my lord, and so am I too, I promise you: I put up with these things tolerably well in the Indies, I did not go there to be happy; but, after all my labours to find I have just got the money when it is out of my power to enjoy it, is a cursed stroke:—like a fine ship of war, I am only come home to be dismasted and converted into an hospital. However, I am glad you hold it better: I do n't think you look'd as well when we parted. My sister, poor Susan! she is gone too—Well, we can never live a day the longer for thinking on 't. Where 's Frank? Is he still the image of his mother?

L. *Glen.* Just as you left him, but that the innocence of the boy is dignified by the knowledge of the man.

Gov. He will hardly remember his old uncle!——I did love the rogue, that 's the truth on 't; and never looked at

my money-bags but I thought of him.——However, you have provided him a wife?

L. *Glen.* I have; you saw her on your arrival, I suppose, for I left her in town to attend a sick aunt. Poor Mortimer! he died one month before the Duke his brother, and missed a fine title and estate. You know how I loved the honest fellow, and cannot wonder I took home his orphan'd daughter, as a match for Woodville.

Gov. Brother, brother, you are too generous; it is your foible, and artful people know how to convert it to their own advantage.

L. *Glen.* It is, if a foible, the noblest incident to humanity. Sophia has birth, merit, accomplishments—and wants nothing but money to qualify her for any rank.

Gov. Can she have a worse want on earth? Birth, merit, accomplishments, are the very things that render money more essential: if she had been brought up in a decent plain way, indeed—but she has the airs of a peeress already; and, if any philosopher doubts of the perpetual motion, I would advise him to watch the knocker of your house. Then you have, out of your precise decorums, removed your son to make way for this flirt of fashion; and what is the consequence of rendering him thus early his own master?

L. *Glen.* If you run on thus, only to divert yourself, with all my heart; but, if you would throw a real imputation on Miss Mortimer's conduct, she is entitled to my serious defence. I never saw any good arise from secluding young people; and authorise Woodville and Sophia to live with that innocent elegance, which renders every rank easy, and prevents pleasure from seducing the heart, or ignorance the senses.

Gov. My lord, I am amazed at you! Was there ever yet a woman who did n't mean to pass for a goddess? Do they

not gain upon us continually, till nothing of our prerogative remains but the name? We are wise fellows truly, if we do not keep down this humour of their's as long as possible, by breeding them in retirement. Every tinsel fop will find address enough to convince a wife she is an angel; and the husband must be lucky, as well as sensible, who reconciles her to treatment so inferior to her deserts. Woodville will agree with me, I dare say; for the character suits with his intended; and, faith, he will make but a modish husband, or he could not endure to see her flying about, like the queen bee, with the whole hive at her heels.

L. *Glen.* You are too captious, brother!

Gov. And you too placid, brother! If, like me, you had been toiling a third of your days to compass a favorite design, and found it disappointed at the moment you thought it complete, what would even your serene lordship say and do?—Here have I promised myself a son in your's, an heir in your's;—instead of which———

L. *Glen.* His marriage with Miss Mortimer will not make him unworthy either title.

Gov. Never mention her name to me, I beg, my lord!—I hate all mode-mongers of either sex: the wife I would have given him, has beauty without knowing it, innocence without knowing it, because she knows nothing else, and to surprise you farther, forty thousand pounds without knowing it—nay, to bring all your surprises together, is my daughter without knowing it.

L. *Glen.* Your daughter! Why, have you married since my sister's death? your daughter by her you lost before you went abroad.

Gov. Yes, but I shall find her again, I believe.——I know you will call this one of my odd whims, as usual, but we have all some; witness this dainty project of yours; and

so I will tell you the truth in spite of that project.—From the very birth of this girl, I saw her mother would spoil her, and, had she lived, proposed kidnapping Miss in her infancy.

L. *Glen.* Kidnap your own daughter!—Why, brother, I need only prove this to obtain a commission of lunacy, and shut you up for life.

Gov. Why, though my wife was your lordship's sister, I will venture to tell you she was plaguy fantastical, and contrived to torment me as much with her virtues, as others by their vices—such a fuss about her delicacy, her sensibility, and her refinement, that I could neither look, move, nor speak, without offending one or the other; and execrated the inventor of the jargon every hour in the four and twenty; a jargon, I resolved my girl should never learn; and Heaven no sooner took her mother (Heaven be praised for all things!) than I dispatched her draggletail'd French governess; made a bonfire of every book on education; whipped Miss into a post-chaise, under a pretence of placing her in a nunnery; instead of which I journeyed into Wales, and left her in the care of a poor curate's wife, whose name was up as the best housewife in the whole country; then returned with a solemn history of her death in the small-pox.

L. *Glen.* Well, this is indeed astonishing! an admirable tutoress, truly, for my niece!

Gov. Yes, but there 's a better jest than that.

L. *Glen.* Indeed!—is that possible?

Gov. How do you think I contrived to make them obey my instructions? I saw they suspected I was some rich humourist, and was afraid they would, after all, make a little bit of a gentlewoman of her, for which reason, except the first year in advance, they never had a single shilling of my money.

L. *Glen.* This is almost incredible! and so you left your only child to the charity of strangers?

Gov. No, no, not so bad as that, neither. You remember my honest servant, Hardy? After the poor fellow's leg was shot off in my tent, I promised him a maintenance; so, entrusting him with the secret, I ordered him to live in the neighbourhood, have an eye on the girl, and claim her if ill-used. Fine accounts I had from him, faith! The old parson and his wife having no children, and not finding any one own her, gave out she was their's, and doated on her; in short, she is the little wonder of the country; tall as the palm-tree! with cheeks that might shame the drawing-room, and eyes, will dim the diamonds I have brought over to adorn them. This confounded gout has kept me in continual alarm, or else she should have spoke for herself.

L. *Glen.* Why then does not Hardy bring her up to you?

Gov. Why, for two very sufficient reasons:—In the first place, that identical parson paid him the last compliment, that is, buried him a twelvemonth ago; and in the second, they would hardly entrust her to any man but him who delivered her to them. Here was a girl, my lord, to support your title, of which I dare swear you are as fond as ever: she would have brought you a race of true Britons; instead of which, from the painted dolls and unjointed Macaronies of these days, we shall produce our own enemies, and have a race of Frenchmen born in England.

L. *Glen.* I thank your intention, brother; but am far from wishing the chief accomplishments of Woodville's lady should be the making cream cheeses, goats whey, and elder wine.

Gov. Let me tell your lordship, women were never better than when those were their chief accomplishments. But I may be ridiculous my own way, without being singular——

Harcourt shall have my girl, and my money too. Cream cheeses, quotha? no, no, making cream faces is an accomplishment which the belles of these days oftener excel in.

L. *Glen.* I would not advise you to publish this opinion, Governor?

Gov. But where is this son of your's? sure he has not totally forgot his old uncle?

L. *Glen.* He will be here immediately.

Gov. Nay, I must e'en take an old man's fate, and follow his mistress without complaint.

L. *Glen.* You have no reason for the reproach; this is not his hour for visiting Miss Mortimer.

Gov. Miss Mortimer! ha, ha, ha! why, do you think I took her for his mistress?—What, I warrant I can tell you news of your own family, though I have hardly been three days in it —Woodville keeps a girl, and in great splendor! nay, they tell me, that the unconscionable young rogue encroaches so far on the privileges of threescore, as to intend marrying the slut.

L. *Glen.* You jest, surely?

Gov. There's no jest like a true one.—Ha, ha, ha! how foolish you look!—this is your innocent elegance, this is the blessed effect of letting him live out of your own house!

L. *Glen.* Pr'ythee reserve your raillery, sir, for some less interesting occasion—to have my views thus in a moment overturned!——Where does she live?

Gov. Ha, ha, ha!—oh, the difference of those little syllables *me* and *thee!* now you can guess what made me so peevish, I suppose? As to where Miss lives, I have not heard; but somewhere near his lodgings. A devilish fine girl she is, by the bye. Ah, I told you, twenty years ago, you would spoil this boy, entirely spoil him.

L. *Glen.* Zounds! Governor, you have a temper Socrates

himself could not have supported. Is this a time for old sayings of twenty years ago? Finish dressing; by that time your nephew will be here, and I shall have reflected on this matter.

Gov. With all my heart. 'Tis but a boyish frolick, and so good morning to you. Here; where's my triumvirate? Pompey, Antony, Cæsar! [*Exit.*

L. *Glen.* A boyish frolick truly!—many a foolish fellow's life has been marked by such a boyish frolick!—But her residence is the first object of my enquiry.—Vane!

VANE *enters.*

Is not my son come?

Vane. This moment, my lord; and walks till the Governor is ready.

L. *Glen.* Vane!—I have deserved you should be attached to me, and I hope you are?

Vane. My lord!—What the devil is he at? [*Aside.*

L. *Glen.* This strange old Governor has alarmed me a good deal—you are more likely to know, whether with reason, than I can be. Have you heard any thing important of my son, lately?

Vane. Never, my lord.

L. *Glen.* Not that he keeps a mistress?—What does the fool smile at?

Vane. I did not think that any thing important, my lord.

L. *Glen.* I do, sir—and am told a more important thing; that he even thinks of marrying her. Now, though I cannot credit this, I would choose to know what kind of a creature she is. Could not you assume a clownish disguise, and scraping an acquaintance with her people, learn something of her character and designs?

Vane. Doubtless, to oblige your lordship, I could do such

a thing——But, if Mr. Woodville's sharp eyes (and love will render them still sharper) should discover me, I might chance to get a good drubbing in the character of a spy.

L. *Glen.* Oh, it is very improbable he should suspect you ——at the worst, name your employer, and your bones are safe.——The office, perhaps, is not very agreeable, but I impose few such on you: execute it well, and you shall remember it with pleasure——I will detain Woodville till you are ready; and, as I doubt not that his next visit will be to this creature; by following him you will find out where she lives. Prepare then as quick as possible, and send me word when you are ready; for, till then, I will not suffer him to depart. [*Exit.*

Vane. A pretty errand this, his formal lordship has honoured me with!—Um; if I betray him, shall I not get more by it; ay, but our heir is such a sentimental spark, that, when his turn was served, he might betray me.—— Were he one of our hare-um, skare-um, good-natured, good-for-nothing fellows, it would go against my conscience to do him an ill turn. I believe I stand well in my lord's will, if Counsellor Puzzle may be trusted (and, when he can get nothing by a lye, perhaps he may tell truth) so, like all thriving men, I will be honest, because it best serves my interest. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A confined Garden. WOODVILLE *walking about.*

Wood. How tedious is this uncle!——how tedious every body!——was it not enough to spend two detestable months from my love, merely to preserve the secret, but I must be tantalized with seeing without arriving at her? yet how,

when I do see her, shall I appease that affecting pride of a noble heart, conscious too late of its own inestimable value? ——Why was I not uniformly just?———I had then spared myself the bitterest of regrets.

Captain HARCOURT *enters.*

Har. Woodville! how do'st?—Do n't you, in happy retirement, pity my Ealing and Acton marches and countermarches, as Foote has it?—But, methinks, thy face is thinner and longer than a forsaken nymph's, who is going through the whole ceremony of nine month's repentance.——What, thou 'st fall'n in love?—rustically too?——nay, pr'ythee, do n't look so very lamentable!

Wood. Ridiculous!——keep this park-conversation for military puppies!—How can we have an eye or ear for pleasure, when our fate hangs over us undecided?

Har. I guess what you mean; but why make mountains of mole-hills? Is the rosy-fisted damsel so obstinately virtuous?

Wood. Imagine a fair favourite of Phœbus in all respects; since, while her face caught his beams, her heart felt his genius! Imagine all the graces hid under a straw hat, and russet gown: imagine——

Har. You have imagined enough of conscience!—and now for a few plain facts, if you please.

Wood. To such a lovely country maid I lost my heart last summer; and soon began to think romances the only true histories; all the toilsome glories recorded by Livy, phantoms of pleasure, compared with the mild enjoyments described by Sir Philip Sydney; and happiness not merely possible in a cottage, but only possible there.

Har. Well; all the philosophers (ancient and modern) would never be able to convince me, a coach was not a

mighty pretty vehicle; and the lasses as good-natured in town as country: but pray let us know, why you laid aside the pastoral project of eating fat bacon and exercising a crook all day, that thou might't conclude the evening with the superlative indulgence of a peat-fire and a bed stuffed with straw?

Wood. Why, faith, by persuading the dear girl to share mine.

Har. Oh, now you talk the language of the world: and does that occasion thee such a melancholy face?

Wood. How ignorant are you both of me and her! Every moment since I prevailed, has only served to convince me, I can sooner live without every thing else than her; and this fatal leisure (caused by my absence with my father) she has employed in adding every grace of art to those of nature; till, thoroughly shocked at her situation, her letters are as full of grief as love, and I dread to hear every hour I have lost her.

Har. I dread much more to hear you have lost yourself. Ah, my dear Woodville, the most dangerous charm of love is, every man conceits no other ever found out his method of loving; but, take my word for it, your Dolly may be brought back to a milk-maid. Leave her to herself awhile, and she'll drop the celestials, I dare swear.

Wood. She is too noble: and nothing but the duty I owe to so indulgent a father, prevents me from offering her all the reparation in my power.

Har. A fine scheme, truly! Why, Woodville, art frantic? —To predestinate yourself among the horned cattle of Doctors' Commons, and take a wife for the very reason which makes so many spend thousands to get rid of one——

Wood. To withdraw an amiable creature from her duty, without being able to make her happy, is to me a very se-

rious reflection; nay, I sinned, I may say, from virtue: and, had I been a less grateful son, might have called myself a faultless lover.

Har. Well, well, man! you are young enough to trust to Time, and he does wonders. Don't go now and ruin yourself with your uncle; I have found him out already, and advertise you, none of your formal obsequious bows and respectful assents will do with him; having been cheated in former times of half his fortune by a parasite, he mistrusts every one, and always mistakes politeness for servility. Maintain your own opinion, if you would win his; for he generally grows undetermined, the moment he knows those around him are otherwise: and, above all, shake off this mental lethargy.

Wood. I will endeavour to take your advice.——Should she fly, I were undone for ever!—but you are no judge of my Cecilia's sincerity. How should you know those qualities which rise with every following hour? Can you think so meanly of me, as that I could be duped by a vulgar wretch? a selfish wanton? oh, no! she possesses every virtue but the one I have robbed her of. [*Exit.*

Har. [*Alone.*] Poor Frank! thy sponsors surely, by intuition, characterized thee when they gave thee that name. Did I love your welfare less, I could soon ease your heart, by acquainting you of my marriage with Miss Mortimer; but now the immediate consequence would be this ridiculous match. How, if I apprize either my Lord or the Governor? both obstinate in different ways: I might betray only to ruin him.——A thought occurs; my person is unknown to her—choosing an hour when he is absent, I'll pay her a visit, offer her an advantageous settlement, and learn from her behaviour her real character and intentions. [*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

An elegant Dressing-Room, with a Toilette richly ornamented. A Harpsichord, and a Frame with Embroidery. BRIDGET *fetches various small Jars with Flowers, and talks as she places them.*

Bridget.

LORD help us!—How fantastical some folks not an hundred miles off are!—If I can imagine what's come to my lady. Here has she been sighing and groaning these two months, because her lover was in the country; and now, truly, she's sighing and groaning because he is come to town.—Such maggots indeed!—I might as well have staid in our parish all the days of my life, as to live mewed up with her in this dear sweet town: I could but have done that with a *vairtuous* lady—although I know she never was at Fox-Hall in all her jaunts, and we two should cut such a figure there!—Bless me! what's come to the glass? [*Setting her dress.*]—Why, sure, it is dulled with her eternal sighing, and makes me look as frightful as herself!—O! here she comes, with a face as long and dismal, as if he was going to be married, and to somebody else too.

CECILIA *enters, and throws herself on the Sopha, leaning on her hand.*

Cec. What can detain Woodville such an age!—It is an hour at least since he rode by.—Run, Bridget! and look if you can see him through the drawing-room window.

Brid. Yes, madam, [*Exit, eying her with contempt.*

Cec. How wearisome is every hour to the wretched——They catch at each future one, merely to while away the

present. For, were Woodville here, could he relieve me from the torment of reflection? or the strong, though silent, acknowledgment my own heart perpetually gives of my error?

Brid. [*Without.*] Here he comes, ma'am, here he comes!

Cec. Does he?—Run down then. [*Fluttered.*

Brid. Dear me, no; 'tis not, neither; [*Entering.*] 'tis only the French ambassador's new cook, with his huge bag and long ruffles.

Cec. Blind animal!—Sure nothing is so tormenting as expectation.

Brid. La, ma'am!—any thing will torment one, when one has a mind to be tormented; which must be your case for sartin. What signifies sitting mope, mope, mope, from morning to night?—You'd find yourself a deal better if you went out only two or three times a day.—For a walk, we are next door to the park, as I may say; and, for a ride, such a dear sweet vis-a-vis and pretty horses might tempt any one; then, as to company, you'll say, 'A fig 'for your starched ladies, who owe their virtue to their ug- 'liness!'—mine is very much at your service. [*Curtesies.*

Cec. How could I endure this girl did I not know that her ignorance exceeds even her impertinence?—I have no pleasure in going abroad.

Brid. Oh la, ma'am! how should you know till you try? Sure every body must wish to see and be seen.—Then there's such a delightful hurricane; all the world are busy, though most are doing nothing;—to splash the mob, and drive against the people of quality!——Oh, give me a coach, and London for ever and ever!—You could but lock yourself up, were you as old and ugly as gay Lady Grizzle, at next door.

Cec. Had I been so, I had continued happy.

Brid. La, ma'am, don't ye talk so purphanely——Happy to be old and ugly?——Or, I 'll tell you what, as you don't much seem to fancy going out, suppose you were to come down now and then (you know we have a pure large hall) and take a game of romps with *us?* If you were once to see our Jacob hunt the slipper, you would die with laughing! ——Madam Frisk, my last mistress, used, as soon as ever master was gone (and indeed he did not trouble her much with his company) to run down, draw up her brocaded niggle-de-gee, and fall to play at some good fun or other!—Dear heart, we were as merry then as the day was long!—I am sure I have never been half so happy since!

Cec. I cannot possibly imitate the model you propose; but though *I* don't choose to go abroad, you may.

Brid. I don't love to go much among the mobility, neither. If indeed, madam, next winter you 'd give me some of your tickets, I would fain go to a masquerade (it vexes me to see um stick in the thing-um-bobs for months together), and Mrs. Trim promises me the lent of a *Venus's* dress, which, she says, I shall cut a figure in. Now, ma'am, if I had but some diamonds (for beggars wear diamonds there, they say) who knows but I might make my fortune, like you?

Cec. Mar it, much rather, like me.——That is no place for girls of your station, which exposes you to so much insult.

Brid. Ah, let me alone, madam, for taking care of number one. I ware never afeard but once in my whole life, and that ware of grandfar's ghost; for he always hated I, and used to walk (poor soul!) in our barken, for all the world like an ass with a tye-wig on. [*Knocking hard.*

Cec. Hark! that sure is Woodville's knock! Fly, and see!

[*Walks eagerly to the door, and returns as eagerly.*]—Alas! is this my repentance? Dare I sin against my judgment?

WOODVILLE *enters.*

Wood. My Cecilia!——My soul!——Have I at last the happiness of beholding you?——You know me too well to imagine I would punish *myself* by a moment's voluntary delay.

Cec. Oh, no; it is not that— [*Both sit down on the sopha.*

Wood. Say you are glad to see me; afford me one kind word to atone for your cold looks!—Are you not well?

Cec. Rather say I am not happy.—My dear Woodville, I am an altered being!—Why have you reduced me to shrink thus in your presence?—Oh! why have you made me unworthy of yourself? [*Leans against his shoulder, weeping.*

Wood. Cruel girl!—Is this my welcome?—When did I appear to think you so?

Cec. Tell me when any one else will think me otherwise.

Wood. Will you never be above so narrow a prejudice?—Are we not the whole world to each other?—Nay, dry your tears! allow me to dry them; [*Kisses her cheek.*] What is there in the reach of love or wealth I have not sought to make you happy?

Cec. That which is the essence of all enjoyments—innocence!——Oh, Woodville! you knew not the value of the heart, whose peace you have destroyed. My sensibility first ruin'd my virtue, and then my repose. But, though, for you, I consented to abandon an humble happy home, to embitter the age of my venerable father, and bear the contempt of the world, I can never support my own!——My heart revolts against my situation, and hourly bids me renounce a splendour, which only renders guilt more despicable.—

[*Rises.*] I meant to explain this hereafter; but the agitation of my mind obliged me to lighten it immediately.

Wood. Is your affection then already extinct?—For sure it must, when you can resolve to torture me thus.

Cec. Were my love extinct, I might sink into a mean content!——Oh, no!—'T is to that alone I owe my resolution.

Wood. Can you then plunge me into despair?—So young, so lovely too!—Oh! where could you find so safe an asylum as my heart?—Whither could you fly?

Cec. I am obliged to you, sir, for the question; but who is it has made me thus destitute?—I may retain your protection, indeed, but at what price?

Wood. Give me but a little time, my love! I am equally perplexed between my father and my uncle; each of whom offers me a wife I can never love. Suffer them to defeat each other's schemes!—Let me, if possible, be happy without a crime; for I must think it one, to grieve a parent hitherto so indulgent. I will not put any thing in competition with your peace; and long for the hour when the errors of the lover will be absorbed in the merits of the husband.

Cec. No, Woodville!—That was, when innocent, as far above my hopes, as it is now beyond my wishes. I love you too sincerely to reap any advantage from so generous an error: yet you at once flatter and wound my heart, in allowing me worthy such a distinction; but love cannot subsist without esteem; and how should I possess yours, when I have lost even my own?

Wood. It is impossible you should ever lose either, while so deserving of both. I shall not be so easily denied hereafter, but am bound by the caprices of others at present.—I am obliged to return directly, but will hasten to you the very first moment. When we meet again, it must be with a smile, remember!

Cec. It will, when we meet again.—Oh, how those words oppress me! [*Aside.*]—But do not regulate your conduct by mine, nor make me an argument with yourself, for disobeying my lord; for here I solemnly swear never to accept you without the joint consent of both our fathers; and that I consider as an eternal abjuration! But, may the favoured woman you are to make happy, have all my love without my weakness! [*Exit in tears.*

Wood. Disinterested, exalted girl!—Why add such a needless bar? For is it possible to gain my father's consent? And yet, without her, life would be insupportable! The censures of the world!—What is that world to me?—Were I weak enough to sacrifice her to the erroneous judgment of the malicious and unfeeling, what does it offer to reward me?——Commendations I can never deserve, and riches I can never enjoy. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Street before Cecilia's *House.* JACOB *opens the door, and lets out* WOODVILLE, *who passes over the Stage;* Jacob *remains with his hands in his pockets, whistling.* VANE *enters disguised, with a basket of game in his hand.*

Vane. So, there he goes at last. I may open the attack without fear of a discovery, since our hopeful heir will hardly return directly.—This intelligence of my landlord's at the Blue-Posts has made the matter much easier.——Um, a good subject!—Sure I ought to know that bumpkin's face! —As I live, my play-fellow at the parish-school, Jacob Gawky!——Now for a touch of the old dialect.——D'ye hire, young mon!—Prey, do ye knaw where one Bett Dowson do live?

Jac. Noa, not I.

Vane. Hay!—Why, zure as two-pence, thou beest Jacob Gawky!

Jac. Odsbodlikins! zo I be, indeed!——But who beest hee?

Vane. What, doost not knaw thy ould zkhoolfellow, Wull, mun?

Jac. Hay!—What—Wull?—Od rabbit it, if I be n't desprate glad to zee thee:—Where doost live now, mun?

Vane. Down at huome, in our parish. I be coom'd up with Zur Izaac Promise, to be meade excoiseman.

Jac. Thee 'st good luck, faith! wish, no odds to thee, my fortin ware as good!—but thee d'st *always* a muortal good notion of wroiting and cyphers, while I do n't knaw my own neame when I do zee it.——What didst leave zea for?

Vane. Why, I ware afraid I should be killed before I com'd to be a great mon:—But what brought thee into this foine house?

Jac. Fortin, Wull! fortin.——Didst thee knaw Nan o' th' Mill?

Vane. Noa, not I.

Jac. Od rabbit it! I thought every muortal zoul had knawd zhe.—Well, Nan and I ware such near neighbors, thare ware only a barn between us; zhe ware a desprate smart lass, that 's the truth on 't: and I had half a moind to teake to feyther's business, and marry zhe: but ecod the zimpletony grow'd so fond, that some how or other I ware tir'd first! when, behold you, zquire takes a fancy to me, and made I cuome and live at the hall; and as my head run all on tuown, when aw comed up to London, aw brought I wi' un: zo I thought to get rid that way of the bullocking of Nan.

Vane. But, Jacob, how didst get into thic foine house?

Jacob. Dang it, doant I zeay I'll tell thee present—Zoa, as I ware zaying—one holiday I went to zee thic there church, wi' the top like a huge punch-bowl turned auver; and, dang it! who should arrive in the very nick but madam Nan:——Well, huome comes I, as merry as a cricket; zquire caals for I in a muortal hurry; when, who should I zee, but madam Nan on her marrowbones, a croying for dear loife! dang it, I thought at first I should ha' zwounded; zo a made a long zarmant about 'ducing a poor girl, and zaid I should zartainly go to the divil for it, and then turned I off. But the best fun is to come, mun:—rabbit me! if aw did not teake Nan into keeping himself, and zhe do flaunt it about, as foine as a dutchess!

Vane. A mighty religious moral gentleman, truly! [*Aside.*]—Well, how came ye to this pleace?

Jac. Why, Meay-day, walking in Common-Garden, to smell the pozeys, who should I zee but our Bridget! I was muortal glad to zee her, you must needs think, and zhe got I thic here pleace.

Vane. Wounds! dost live wi' a lord in this foine house?

Jac. Noa; a leady, you fool! but zuch a leady, zuch a dear, easy, good-natured creature! zhe do never say noa, let we do what we wull.

Vane. Now to the point. [*Aside.*]—Is your lady married?

Jac. Noa: but she's as good; and what'st think, mun?—to a lord's zon!——though if a ware a king, aw would not be too good for zhe.——A muortal foine comely mon too, who do love her, as aw do the eyes in his head. Cousin Bridget do tell I, she zeed'd a letter where aw do zay aw wull ha' her any day of the week, whatever do come o' th' next.——Why, I warrant they have 'pointed wedding day!

Vane, The devil they have? my lord will go mad at this news. [*Aside.*

Jac. Lauk a deazy! how merry we will be on that day! —Wo't come and junket wi' us?

Vane. Yes, yes, I shall certainly make one among you—either then or before; [*Aside.*] but now I must go and give this geame to zquire—zquire—what the dickens be his neame! I do *always* forget it——there zhould be a ticket somewhere:—zoa—rabbit me! if some of your London fauk ha' no' cut it off, out o' fun!

Jac. Ha, ha, ha! ecod, nothing more likelier. [*Both laugh foolishly.*] The rum people be zo zharp as needles.—But there's no pleace like it for all that—I be set upon living and dying in it.

Vane. Now to secure my return if necessary. [*Aside.*]—I 'll tell thee what, Jacob! seeing as how I ha' lost thic there direction, do thee teake the basket: 't is only a present of geame from the parson o' our parish; and, if zo be I can't find the gentleman, why, 't is honestly mine. Meay be I 'll come, and teake a bit o' supper wi' ye.

Jac. Wull ye, indeed!—dang it! that 's clever; and then you 'll see our Bridget. She's a muortal zmart lass, I promise ye!—and, meay be, may'st get a peap at my leady, who's desperate handsome!—Good bye t' ye. Bridget's zo comical!—Odd rabbit it, we 'll be main merry. [*Exit.*

Vane. [*Alone.*] Thus far I have succeeded to admiration! our young heir has really a mind to play the fool, and marry his mistress! though, faith, marrying *his own* does not seem very inexcusable, when so many of his equals modestly content themselves with the cast-offs of half *their acquaintance.*

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

An Apartment in Cecilia's *House.* BRIDGET *enters.*

Brid. So, just the old story again!—crying, crying for ever!—Lord if I was a man, I should hate such a whimpering—what would she have, I wonder? to refuse such a handsome, genteel, good-natured man!—and, I'll be sworn, he offer'd to marry her; for I listened with all my ears!—oh, that he would have *me* now!—I should become my own coach purdigiously, that 's a sure thing. Hay, who knocks?

JACOB *enters.*

Jac. A young mon do want my leady.

Brid. A man!——what sort of a man?

Jac. Why, a mon——like—just such another as I.

Brid. No, no, no;——that 's not so easy to find.—what can any man want with her? shew him in here, Jacob.

Jac. [*Returning in a kind of glee.*] When shall we have the wedding, Bridget?

Brid. We shall have a burying first, I believe.

Jac. Od rabbit it! we won't be their seconds there, faith! [*Exit.*

Brid. Now, if he mistakes me for my lady, I shall find out what he wants.

Captain HARCOURT, *disguised, with* JACOB *enter.*

Har. [*Surveying her.*]———Is *that* your lady?

Jac. He, he, he! lauk, zur, do n't you knaw that 's our *Bridget?*

Brid. So, deuce on him, there 's my whole scheme spoilt!——My lady, sir, is engaged; but, if you tell me your business, it will do just as well.

Har. For yourself it may, child!

[*Chucks her under the chin.*

Brid. What, you belong to Mr. Gargle the apothecary? or come from the jeweller on Ludgate-hill? or have a letter from———

Har. [*Interrupting her.*]——The very person; you have hit it. And now, do me the favour to tell your lady, a *stranger* wishes to speak to her on particular business.

Brid. Very well, sir:——was ever handsome man so crabbed!

Har. Egad, if the mistress have half as much tongue as the maid, Woodville may catch me in the midst of my first speech.——Now for my credentials! and here she comes! ——a lovely girl, indeed! I can scarce blame Frank, for she awes *me*.

CECILIA *enters, followed officiously by* BRIDGET.

Cec. I was informed, sir, you had particular business with me.

Har. I took the liberty, madam,——I say, madam, I——

Cec. As I have neither friends or relations in London [*Sighs.*] I am at a loss to guess———

Har. What I would communicate, madam, requires secrecy.

Cec. Bridget, go where I ordered you just now.

Brid. Yes, madam; but if I an't even with you for this.

[*Exit.*

Cec. I complied with your request, sir, without enquiring the motive; because you, I think, *can* have only one—My father, if I may trust my heart, has made you his messenger to an unwilling offender.

Har. Pardon me, madam, but I refer you to this.

Cec. [*Reads.*]

'Madam,

'Being certainly informed Mr. Woodville is on the point of marrying a lady chosen by his friends, when it is presumed you will be disengaged, a nobleman of rank, and estate above what *he* can ever possess, is thus early in laying his heart and fortune at your feet, lest some more lucky rival should anticipate him.——The bearer is authorised to disclose all particulars, and offer you a settlement worthy your acceptance.—Deign, madam, to listen to him on the subject, and you will find the unknown lover as generous and not less constant than Woodville.'

Cec. Good Heavens! to what an insult have I exposed myself!—[*She bursts into tears, and sinks into a Chair, without minding* Harcourt; *who watches her with irresolution.*

Har. What can I think?—there is an air of injur'd delicacy in her, which teaches me to reproach myself for a well-meant deceit.——If, madam,———

Cec. I had forgot this wretch. [*Rises.*] Return, sir, to your vile employer: tell him, whoever he is, I am too sensible of the insult, though not entitled to resent it——tell him I have a heart above my situation, and that he has only had the barbarous satisfaction of adding another misery to those which almost overwhelmed me before.

Har. Hear me, madam, I conjure you!

Cec. Never! a word would contaminate me——

[*Struggling to get off.*

Har. Nay, you shall——You do not know half the good consequences of this letter; I am the friend, the relation of Woodville—my name Harcourt!

Cec. Is it possible *he* should be so cruel, so unjust—

Har. He is neither cruel nor unjust, but only unfortunate. —Hear—He designs to marry you; this I learnt from himself only this morning. As a proof of my sincerity, I will

own I doubted your right to that mark of his esteem, and made this trial in consequence. Pleased to find you worthy of his rank, I feel shocked at reminding you, you ought not to share it. But, madam, if you truly love him, you cannot wish that, to be just to you, he should be unjust to those who have a prior right over him. This shall positively be my last effort. [*Aside.*

Cec. A motive like yours, sir, will excuse any thing. How little my happiness, honour, or interest, *ever* weighed against his, need not be repeated. Far be it from me *now* to disgrace him; he is apprized of my invincible objections to a match which will never take place. May he form a happier, while I by a voluntary poverty expiate my offence.

Har. Ma—Ma—what the devil choaks me so?—I am struck with your sentiments, and must find you a proper asylum. The moment I saw you I had hopes such manners could not veil an immoral heart. I have proved your sincerity, and owe a reparation to your delicacy. The proposed bride of Woodville is every way worthy that distinction; nor am I without hopes even *she* will be prevailed on to protect you.—But I must not leave a doubt of my sincerity!—do you know Miss Mortimer?

Cec. I have seen the lady, sir. But dare I credit my senses?—has Heaven form'd two such hearts, and for me?——

Har. With her, your story will be buried for ever: and, I think, the sooner you disappear, the more easily will you prevent Woodville's disobedience. I will open the affair to Miss Mortimer directly, and, if she acquiesces, desire her to call for you in person, to prevent the possibility of any artifice.

Cec. He, who inspired such sentiments, alone can reward them! Oh, sir, you have raised a poor desponding heart;

but it shall be the business of my future life to deserve those favours I can never half repay.

Har. I find, by punishing me with acknowledgments, you are resolved to be obliged to me. The time is too precious to be wasted on such trifles. At seven, you shall have certain intelligence of my success; employ the interim to the best advantage, and hope every thing from daring to deserve well. [*Exit.*

Cec. [*Alone.*] Astonishing interposition of Heaven!—— Hope!—What have I to hope?—but let the consciousness of acting rightly, support me in the sad moment of renouncing Woodville; and, in him, all that rendered life desirable. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

Lord Glenmore's *House.* Lord GLENMORE *and* VANE *enter.*

L. *Glen.* And are you sure of all this?

Vane. Absolutely, my lord; I have known the bumpkin, her footman, from the height of his own club.

L. *Glen.* What a cursed infatuation!—these are the comforts of children!—our fears beginning, from the moment our power ends;—the happiest of fathers is not to be envied—I know not what to resolve on!

Vane. If I may be permitted to advise, my lord——

L. *Glen.* And who asked your advice, sir?

Vane. You have, my lord, formerly.

L. *Glen.* Take care you stay till I do! Leave me, sir.

Vane. If you don't like my advice, I shall give you my opinion very shortly.—A crusty crab! [*Exit muttering.*

L. *Glen.* This is the certain consequence of entrusting low people; and yet there is no doing without them. I can

never master my feelings enough to speak properly to Woodville on the subject, therefore must fix on some other method—[*Pauses.*]—That 's a sure one, and falls heavy on the artful, aspiring creature only!——Vane!——

Vane *re-enters.*

Could not you procure me a travelling chaise and four stout fellows, immediately?

Vane. To be sure, my lord, I can order a chaise at any inn, if you choose it.

L. *Glen.* Pho, pho!—don't put on that face! you must go through with this thing like a man. Here 's something for the share you have already had in it.—Do what I have ordered, and wait near the Horse-Guards in about an hour; when I shall seize this insolent baggage, and convey her out of my son's reach. You gave me a high-flown account of her; and as you are a smart young fellow, and she must at least be pretty, if we can contrive to frighten her into taking you as a husband, it will end all my fears, and shall be the making of your fortune.

Vane. 'Gad, I like the project well. A handsome wife is the best bait, when we fish for preferment—and this gives me a double claim both on father and son [*Aside.*]——Nothing but the profound respect I have for your lordship, could induce me to think of this—though born without rank and fortune, I have a soul, my lord———

L. *Glen.* Come, come, my good lad! I guess what you would say; but we have no time for speeches.—I have set my heart on the success of this project; and you shall find your interest in indulging me. [*Exeunt different ways.*

SCENE V.

Miss Mortimer's *Apartment.* Captain HARCOURT *enters, meeting* Miss MORTIMER.

Har. If I were to judge of your temper by your looks, my dear, I should say it was uncommonly sweet this morning.

Miss *Mor.* A truce with compliments; I must, in reason, renounce dear flattery after marriage.

Har. To flattery you never paid court; but the language of the heart and the world will, sometimes, resemble. I ought, however, to praise your temper, for I am come to try it, and give you a noble opportunity of exerting its benevolence.

Miss *Mor.* A benevolence you certainly doubt by this studied eulogium.

Har. I might, did I not know it well.—In short, my love, I have taken the strangest step this morning———

Miss *Mor.* What step, for Heaven's sake?

Har. In regard to a lady.———

Miss *Mor.* Not another wife, I hope?

Har. No—only a mistress.———

Miss *Mor.* Oh, a trifle! a trifle!——

Har. You may laugh, madam, but I am serious; and a fine girl she is; nay, to shew you I have not read Chesterfield in vain, I have robbed my dearest friend of her: in plain English, Woodville has a mistress he dotes on so madly, as even to intend marrying her. Imagining her, like most of her stamp, only an artful interested creature, I paid her a visit as a stranger, with an offer which must have unveiled her heart, had it been base; but I found her, on the contrary, a truly, noble-minded girl, and far above her present situation, which she earnestly wishes to quit.—In short, my dear, I thought it prudent to part them; and, in your name, offered her an asylum.

Miss *Mor.* In my name! you amaze me, Mr. Harcourt! Would you associate your wife with a kept mistress? bring such an acquisition into the house of Lord Glenmore, and deprive Woodville of, perhaps his only reason for not interfering with us?—Do you think I credit this sudden acquaintance?

Har. I deceived myself, I find; I thought you above such low suspicion, that you could make distinctions.

Miss *Mor.* Yes, yes, I can make distinctions more clearly than you wished. You must excuse my interference in this affair, sir; and let me hint to you, that your own will do as little credit to your heart as to your understanding.

Har. Mighty well, madam; go on! Settle this with respect to yourself, but do not be concerned about me, for, in one word, if you cannot resolve on protecting this poor unfortunate, I will!

Miss *Mor.* [*Aside.*] That must not be; yet his warmth alarms me.—Nay but, my dear, think deliberately.—Supposing her all you say, the world judges by actions, not thoughts, and will bury her merit in her situation.

Har. It is that cruel argument perpetuates error in so many of your frail sex; be the first to rise above it. That you are in Lord Glenmore's house, will be your justification, both to the world and himself; for, what but a generous motive can actuate you? In my eyes, my dear Sophia, virtue never looks so lovely as when she stretches out her hand to the fallen!

Miss *Mor.* Oh, Harcourt! I am ashamed of my suspicion; I ought to have known all the candour and generosity of your heart, and received, in a moment, the unhappy woman it patronized;—yet, at this crisis in our own affairs to run the chance of farther exasperating my benefactor——

Har. I am not to learn, that friendship and love have been mere masks to fraud and folly in the great world; no

one would blame me, were I to suffer Woodville to ruin himself, as the shortest way of fixing my own fortune, and obtaining my lord's approbation of your choice. But I knew not how it happened, that when a mere boy, I took it into my head, truth was as much to the purpose as lying; and as I never got into more scrapes than others, why, I still pursue my system, and prefer honour to art.—Then, if we fail, we have something better to console us than a pond or pistol: and, if we succeed, what is there wanting to our happiness?

Miss *Mor.* And how do you mean to manage her escape?

Har. That, my dearest, is the difficulty. I found she had seen you, and therefore was obliged to satisfy her of my honour, by assuring her you would call for her in person.

Miss *Mor.* Very well; we must carefully watch our opportunity. You dine here—the word of command you are accustomed to obey, but you must now become obedient to the look; for, you know, I have my difficulties, however strong my desire of obliging you. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

A magnificent Drawing-Room. Miss MORTIMER *pouring out Coffee, sends it to the Company;* Captain HARCOURT *leans against a Pannel near her, sipping it; at a little distance, the* GOVERNOR *and* WOODVILLE *playing at Backgammon, while* Lord GLENMORE *leans over his Chair, thoughtfully observing the behaviour of his Son, who loses merely to make his Uncle leave off.*

Harcourt.

IT grows near the appointed hour, my love!—but how to make sure of Woodville?

Miss *Mor.* You should have thought of that before, my sagacious confidant! However, as I do not need your company, fasten it upon him; pretend a duel, pretend an intrigue; in short, if all else fails, pretend you are dying, and keep him to make your will, rather than suffer him to interrupt me.

L. *Glen.* [*To himself.*] What way can I secure the absence of this son of mine? For, I see plainly, another lucky hit would almost provoke him into throwing the dice in the Governor's face: yet Vane, I doubt, has hardly been able to procure me every convenience in so short a time. However, I will make one of my own garrets his minx's prison, rather than suffer her to interfere with my serious views.

Gov. [*Rising from play.*] Zounds, Frank! you are like the French; so ready to be beat, that there is hardly any triumph in conquering you. But you shall take your revenge, I insist upon it.

Wood. Another time, sir; my head achs; my———in short, I cannot play any longer; my cousin will engage with you.

Har. [*Twitching his sleeve.*] Kind, sir, your cousin is infinitely indebted to you; but he, like yourself, may have something else to do; and so indeed has every body, for we all seem impatient to separate.

Miss *Mor.* [*To the* Servant, *removing coffee.*] Bid Warner send my cloak.

L. *Glen.* Going abroad, my dear?

Miss *Mor.* Only a formal round, my lord.

L. *Glen.* Woodville, you attend Miss Mortimer.

Miss *Mor.* Sweetly contrived that, however; and my lover seems posed—[*Aside to* Harcourt.]—I will not so severely tax Mr. Woodville's politeness, my lord.

Wood. You are very obliging, madam;—[*To* Harcourt.]

and the only thing she has said or done to oblige me this day, *entre nous.*

Har. [*Aside.*] Um, not quite so sure of that, if you knew but all—[*Turning to Miss* Mortimer.] I will march off quietly, and lie in wait for Woodville, so that I think you may depend on his not meeting you.

[*Goes off unobserved.* Woodville *having taken his hat and sword, offers his hand to Miss* Mortimer.

L. *Glen.* So, he is going to escape!—They all take pleasure in perplexing me.—Frank, return to me directly; I have bethought myself of something very important, in which I need your assistance.

Wood. Would I had bethought myself of vanishing like Harcourt!—How devilishly vexatious!

[*Leads Miss* Mortimer *off.*

Gov. So, there goes madam, to coquette, curtsey, and talk nonsense with every well-dressed ape of either sex. Before I would allow a girl such a freedom———

L. *Glen.* Brother, do not judge till you know her, and, give me leave to tell you, these prejudices of your temper will render you very ridiculous.

Gov. The prejudices of my temper! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! this is an excellent jest. Zounds, because you have not the use of your eyes——

L. *Glen.* I shall never have patience!—My head is just now full of something too important to examine which of us is most in the wrong. I am fixed on removing this ambitious minx of my son's for ever out of his reach immediately. Will you oblige me with the company of your servants? Being slaves, they will not dare reveal the affair; and, were they so inclined, can hardly comprehend it.

Gov. Will I? Ay, that I will! and with my own company into the bargain!

L. *Glen.* Hist! he returns; and if we may judge by his countenance, mortified enough to lose the evening away from her.

WOODVILLE *re-enters.*

Go, my dear Frank, first to Puzzle's chambers, for the mortgage of Hayfield-house, and don't fail to learn his whole opinion upon the subject;—[*Aside to the* Governor.]—and that will take two long hours by a very moderate computation;—then proceed to the London Tavern, and ask if Levi, the Jew, waits there by my appointment; otherwise, do you wait there till either he or I join you.

Wood. A pretty round-about employment my father has invented for me! [*Aside.*] and I dare not give the least symptoms of disgust, least that troublesome old uncle of mine should pry into the cause.—I shall observe your orders, my lord—though if the devil has called upon the counsellor a little before his time, I shall consider it as an eternal obligation. [*Exit.*

L. *Glen.* Now I must enquire after Vane. [*Exit.*

Gov. And I will give a little lecture to my myrmidons, and wait, with them, your pleasure.—Od, it will be precious sport, to catch madam so unawares, and see her play off every virtuous grimace with which she entangled young 'Scape-grace. [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

The Hall. VANE *enters looking about.*

Vane. Hey-day! sure his old-fashioned lordship has not employed two of us on one errand!—An old man has been

hovering about madam's house, and has followed me here, without my knowing what to make of him! However, ears befriend me! [*Retires, listening.*

The GOVERNOR *enters, and his black* Servants *soon after.*

Gov. Here, Antony, Pompey, Cæsar! you dogs! be ready to attend my lord and me on a little expedition. No; no flambeaus, boobies!—the chaste Miss Diana will surely take a spiteful pleasure in lighting us to catch another kind of Miss.—And, do ye hear? not one syllable of the when, where, or how; except you intend to dangle on one string, like a bunch of black grapes. [*Talks to them apart.*

GREY *enters.*

Grey. It is here, I am at length informed, the father of this abandoned seducer resides. Yet, what redress can poverty hope from pride?—Surely, however, for his own sake, he will assist me in regaining the poor girl, and afterwards prevent the wretch from pursuing her!—There I suppose he is!——my lord!

Gov. [*Turns short upon him.*] Well, old sturdy!—what do you want with my lord?

Grey. Merciful Heaven! the father of Cecilia.

Vane. [*Listening.*] Hey!—indeed!

Grey. Oh! how my heart misgives me!—perhaps this base Woodville—her very brother——

Gov. What, is the old man ill?—Sure I know this honest—it is not—yet it is—Grey?

Grey. The same indeed, my lord.

Gov. No my lord to me, man! my name is Harcourt.

Grey. Blessed be Heaven for that, however!

Gov. Be not righteous over-much! for that my name is Harcourt, I do not reckon among the first favours of Heaven.

But, ha, ha! perhaps you thought I had no name at all by this time?—Faith, I put a pretty trick upon—well, well, well!—[*To the* Blacks.] You may retire till my lord is ready.—[*Exeunt.*] I am a riddle, honest Grey! but now I am come to expound myself, and make thy fortune into the bargain. It is many a long day since I saw old England. But at last I am come home with a light heart and a heavy purse, design to fetch up my Cicely, give her and my money to the honestest fellow I can find, and grow old amid a rosy race of Britons, springing from a stem reared after my own fashion. There's news for you, my honest friend!

Grey. Alas! How little will he think I deserve his favour when he hears my account of her! And how can I shock a parent with what too severely shocks even myself? [*Aside.*

Gov. What!—Silent, man?—ha, ha, ha!—I can't but laugh to think how foolish you looked at the second year's end, when no allowance came—but that was my own contrivance; all done on purpose, my good old soul! and now it will come in a lump;—there's the whole difference. Well, and so my dame made her a pattern of housewifery, hey?—Od! I don't intend to touch another pickle or preserve that is not of my little Cicely's own doing; and I'll build her a dairy with every bowl and churn of silver!—Zounds, it shall be a finer sight than the Tower of London!—and we'll set up Dame Deborah's statue before it, like Queen Anne's in St. Paul's Church-yard!—but, why dost n't enjoy this discovery, man? art afraid I shall take her from thee? Oh, never think of that; for thou shalt bless every pie she makes; aye, and taste it afterwards, old Pudding-Sleeves.

Grey. Ah, sir! [*Sighing.*

Gov. Hey! Zounds! What dost mean? Sure my Cicely is n't dead!

Grey. No, not dead, sir!

Gov. She's very near it, then, I suppose?

Grey. No, sir.

Gov. No, sir? Then what the devil do you mean by alarming me thus, with your 'No sirs,' after all?

Grey. Alas! Is there no greater evil?

Gov. None, that I know of; but your whole fraternity are not more like ravens in colour than note. Come, let us know what this mighty evil is?

Grey. For years did she increase in goodness as in beauty; the charm of every young heart, and the sole comfort of those old ones, to whom Heaven and man seemed to have consigned her for ever.

Gov. Well, well, I had a little bird told me all this——

Grey. About a twelvemonth ago, during a little absence of mine, a young man of fashion introduced himself into my house; and, my wife being void of suspicion, and the dear girl uninstructed in the ways of this bad world——

Gov. The dog betrayed her! And is this your care, you old——and that ignoramus your wife? Zounds! I am in such a fury; I want to know no more of her infamous conduct. Od! I am strangely tempted to have you strangled this moment, as a just reward for your negligence; and so bury the secret with you.

Grey. It is as effectually buried already, sir—I love the dear unhappy girl too well, ever to tell her Heaven gave her to such a father.

Gov. Yes, yes; you are better suited to the—I hope she pays for this severely!—You make her stand in a white sheet, to be pointed at by the whole village every Sunday, to be sure?

Grey. Alas, sir! She put it out of my power even to forgive her——

Gov. Forgive her! forgive her, truly!

Grey. By flying immediately from her only friend. Infirm and poor, I struggled with the joint evils till now, when, having collected enough to support me, I walked up in search of her; it was only yesterday I discovered her in a splendid coach, which I traced to her house.

Gov. A house? I shall run mad entirely! A coach?—Why, dare the little brazen-face pretend to elegance, when I took such pains to quench every spark of gentility in her?

Grey. In the neighbourhood I discovered the name of her seducer; and, in seeking him, met with you.—Moderate your passion, sir—Reflect!—When age is frail, what can we expect in youth? Shall man desert humanity?

Gov. So, so, so!—Now I am to be tortured with your preaching—I renounce the unworthy little slut. I have no friend—no daughter—no any thing.—Od! I would sooner build an hospital for ideots, like Swift, and endow it with all my fortune, than bestow it on one who thus perverts reason. Hark ye, sir—Forget the way to this house!—Forget you ever saw my face! Would I had never seen yours!—For, if you dare to send her whining to me, I'll torment you with every plague, power, wealth, law, or even lawyers can set in motion—By Heaven, I abjure the audacious little wretch for ever! and will sooner return to India and bury my gold with those from whom it was taken, than bestow a single shilling on her, when she loses her coach and her house!

Grey. [*Contemptuously.*] And I will sooner want a shilling, than suffer her to waste her youth in a state which will render her age an insupportable burthen! Fear not, sir, ever seeing her or me again; for the bosom which reared, will joyfully receive her, nor farther embitter her remaining days with the knowledge she was born the equal of her un-

doer; and deprived herself of all those blessings, Heaven only hid, never denied her. [*Exit.*

Gov. [*Alone.*] Who would have a daughter?—Zounds! I am as hot as if I were in the black hole at Calcutta. If Miss had only married a lout, from ignorance of her birth, I could have forgiven it; but her puppy being of fashion, the papers will get hold of it, and I shall be paragraphed into purgatory.—Fools can turn wits on these occasions; and, 'A certain Governor and his daughter,' will set the grinners in motion from Piccadilly to Aldgate. This insolent old fellow too!—I need not wonder where she got her courage! Not but I like his spirit—Od! I like it much! It proves his innocence. What the devil did I drive him away for!—Here, dogs!—Run after that old man in black, and order him to return to me this moment.

Lord GLENMORE *enters.*

L. *Glen.* And now, brother, I am ready for you.

Gov. Yes; and now, brother, I have something else to mind, and my servants moreover—— [*Exit.*

L. *Glen.* What new whim can this troublesome mortal have taken into his head? [*A rapping at the door.*] I am not at home, remember.—Miss Mortimer!—Who's with her?

Miss MORTIMER *enters, with* CECILIA *in mourning.*

Miss *Mor.* Nay, as to that circumstance—Bless me, here's my lord!

Cec. My lord! Good Heavens, I shall sink into the earth!

Miss *Mor.* He can never guess at you—Recover, my dear creature!

L. *Glen.* Is the lady indisposed, Miss Mortimer?

Miss *Mor.* Yes, my lord; that is, no—I don't know what I am saying. She has been ill lately, and riding has a little overcome her; that's all.—[*Aside to* Cecilia.] Struggle to keep up for Heaven's sake and your own.

Cec. Impossible!

[*Lord* Glenmore *draws a hall-chair, in which she faints.*

L. *Glen.* Warner! drops and water, in a moment—How beautiful she is!—her features are exquisitely fine!

Miss *Mor.* They are thought so, my lord.——Bless me! where can I have crammed my Eau de Luce!—Oh, I have it.

L. *Glen.* Her pulse returns—she revives.

Cec. I beg your pardon, madam!—my lord, too! I am shocked to have occasioned so much trouble.

Miss *Mor.* Absurd to apologize for the infirmity of Nature:—my lord, I do assure you, was quite anxious———

L. *Glen.* The man must surely have lost every sense, who can see this lady, even when deprived of her's, without emotion:—but to me, the langour of illness had ever something peculiarly interesting,—[*Aside.*] I wonder who this elegant creature is! Her hands seems to tremble strangely.

Cec. Oh, madam!———

Miss *Mor.* Silence and recollection alone, can secure you from suspicion; I confess, I relied on his absence.

The GOVERNOR *re-enters.*

Gov. He *won't* return, hey?—od! I like the old Cambrian the better for it:—I have fired his Welch blood finely. Why, what a blockhead was I, not to go after him myself! Methinks, I should like to know Miss, when I meet her in her *coach* too. Um—did he not tell me something of tracing the seducer into this house! [*Stands in amazement a moment, then whistles.*] Woodville's mistress, by every thing contrary! od, I shall seize the gypsy with redoubled satis-

faction! but I must keep my own counsel, or my old beau of a brother will roast me to death on my system of education. Hey! who has he got there? [Cecilia *rises.*] A pretty lass, faith!—Ah, there is the very thing I admire!—there is gentility, without the fantastical flourishes of fashion!—just the very air I hoped my minx would have had. [*Lord* Glenmore *having led off* Cecilia, *returns.*

L. *Glen.* I don't know how, but my inclination to this business is over. I think I'll let the matter alone at present.

Gov. The devil you will; why, by to-morrow, Woodville may have married her.

L. *Glen.* D'ye think so? well, then let's go.

Gov. And, what d'ye intend to do with her, pray?

L. *Glen.* [*Aside.*] I won't trust this weathercock till all is safe. I care not what becomes of her, so she is out of my way;—send her to Bridewell, perhaps!

Gov. To Bridewell, truly?—no, that you sha'n't, neither; Bridewell, quotha!—why, who knows but the fault may be all that young rake-hell, your son's?

L. *Glen.* My son's, sir! let me tell you, I have not bred him in such a manner.

Gov. Oh, if breeding were any security—Zounds, I shall betray all by another word! [*Aside.*

L. *Glen.* What now can have changed you? but you are more inconstant than our climate. Did you ever know one minute what you should think the next? However, to satisfy your scruples, I intend to dispatch her to a nunnery; and, if that don't please you, e'en take charge of her yourself. [*Exeunt together.*

Vane. [*Comes forward.*] Ha, ha, ha! why, this would make a comedy!—and so, of all birds in the air, his dignified lordship has pitched on me for the husband of the Governor's daughter and his own niece!——Well, if I can

but go through with this, it will be admirable!—Thank'd by one for making my fortune, and safe from the anger of all.

A Servant *enters.*

Ser. Mr. Woodville, sir, is just gone into the house you bade me watch. [*Exit.*

Vane. The devil he is!—Why, then I must consign my intended to him for one more night, and persuade my lord to delay our seizure till morning; for, to meet with him, would certainly produce an agreement of all parties, and a marriage which would never enroll my name in the family pedigree, or Governor's will. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Cecilia's *Dressing-Room. Candles burning, and her Clothes scattered.* WOODVILLE *enters.*

Wood. Thanks to that dear lawyer's lucky absence, I have a few happy hours, my love, to spend with thee—[*Looks at her clothes.*] already retired? sure I have not left my key in the garden-gate. No, here it is [*Rings the bell and takes off his sword, then throws himself into a chair.*] Nobody answer—I don't understand this. Perhaps I shall disturb her—— I'll steal into her chamber—[*Goes off and presently returns disordered.*] Not there! her clothes too, the same she had on last:—oh, my heart misgives me!—but where are the servants? [*Rings very violently, calling at the same time,* Bridget! Robert! Jacob!

BRIDGET *enters, with her hat on.*

——Bridget! what's become of your lady?

Brid. Really, sir, I can't say.—Do n't you know?

Wood. If I did I should n't have asked you.

Brid. [*After a little pause.*] Why, sure, sir, my lady has not run away?—and yet something runs in my head, as if she had.——I thought that spark came for no good to-day.

Wood. What spark, girl?

Brid. Why, just after you went away, comes a young man, a monstrous genteel one, and very handsome too, I must needs say; with fine dark eyes, and a fresh colour.

Wood. Damn his colour! tell me his business.

Brid. So he axed for my lady, and would not tell me what he wanted: I came with her, however; but she no sooner set eyes on him than she sent me out; which argufied no good, you 'll say; and, before I could possibly come back, though I ran as fast as ever my legs could carry me, he was gone, and she writing and crying for dear life; but that was no news, so I did not mind it: and when she gave me leave to go to the play, thought no more harm than the child unborn.

Wood. It must be a scheme beyond all doubt, and I am the dupe of a dissembling, ungrateful——Oh, Cecilia!

[*Throws himself in a chair.*

Brid. [*Softening her voice, and setting her dress.*] If I was as you, sir, I would not fret about her; there is not a lady in the land would slight a gentleman so handsome and sweet tempered—I scorns to flatter, for my own part.—Inferials must n't direct their betters: but had I been in my lady's place, a king upon his throne would not have tempted me. —Handsome him that handsome does, say I; and I am sure you did handsome by her: for if she could have eat gold, she might have had it.——He might take some notice, truly. [*Aside.*

Wood. [*Starting up.*] Where was she writing?

Brid. In the little drawing-room, sir. [*Exit* Woodville.

Brid. [*Alone.*] This ridiculous love turns people's brains, I think.—I am sure I said enough to open his eyes; but, may be, I don't look so handsome, because I am not so fine. ——Hey!—a thought strikes me!—My lady is gone, that's plain. Back she will not come, is as plain. [*Gathers together* Cecilia's *elegant clothes.*]——I'll put on these, and he'll think she gave 'em to me: then he may find out I am as pretty as she: if not—he and I are of very different opinions. [*Exit.*

WOODVILLE *re-enters, more disordered.*

Wood. Cruel, ungrateful, barbarous girl! to forsake me in the very moment I was resolving to sacrifice every thing to her! but 't is just.——First dupes to the arts of man, the pupil soon knows how to foil him at his own weapons. Perhaps the discovery is fortunate: In a short time I must have borne the whole disgrace of her ill conduct, and my father's resentment had the bitterest aggravation. But, is she indeed gone? and will continual to-morrows come, without one hope to render them welcome?

JACOB *enters.*

Wood. Villain! where 's your lady?

Jac, 'Las a deazy, how can I tell, zur?

Wood. Where are all your fellows?

Jac. Abroad, making halliday.

Wood. When did you go out? Who gave you leave?

Jac. My leady, her own zelf; and I'll tell you how 't ware.——After dinner I geed her a noate; and, when zhe had red un, zhe axed me if zo be as how I had ever zeed the lions? Zoa I told her noa; nor no mour I never did.—Zoa zhe geed me half a crown, and bid me goa and make

myself happy. I thought it ware desperate koind of her; zoa I went and zeed the huge creturs; and arter, only stopped a bit to peap at the moniment, and hay my fortin tuold by Conj'rer in the Old Bailey; and aw zaid———

Wood. What the devil does it signify to me what he said? —Hark'e, sir, I see in your face you know more of your mistress.

Jac. Dang it, then my feace do lie hugely!

Wood. Tell me the whole truth, villain! or I'll stab you to the heart this instant. [*Draws his sword.*

Jac. [*Kneels.*] I wull, zur, indeed I wull: doa n't ye terrify me zoa! I do forget every thing in the whole world.

Wood. Be sincere, and depend upon my rewarding you.

Jac. Why, I wish I meay die this maument, if conj'rer did not zey I should lose my pleace! nay, aw do verily think aw zaid zomething o' my being put in fear o' my loife. Loard knaws, I little thought how zoon his words would come to pass.

Wood. Will you dally?

Jac. Zoa, as I zaid, zur, when I com'd huome again, I found all the duors aupen, and not a zoul to be zeed.

Wood. [*Aside.*] This fellow can never mean to impose on me, and I must think it a planned affair.——While I was in the country, Jacob, did your mistress see much company?

Jac. Cuompany!—noa, not to speak an——not gentlewomen.

Wood. Gentlewomen! blockhead!—Why, had she any male visitors?

Jac. Anan!

Wood. I must brain thee at last, booby!—Did any men come to see her, then?

Jac. Oh, yes, zur, yes: two gentlemen com'd almost every deay.

Wood. How! two gentlemen? I shall run distracted! Young, and handsome?

Jac. Not auver young, zur, nor auver handsome; but drest muortal foine.

Wood. So, they came almost every day? Very pretty, indeed, Miss Cecilia!—Was you never call'd up while they staid?—Did they come together, or alone?

Jac. Aloane.

Wood. I thought as much; yes, I thought as much. But was you never called up, Jacob?

Jac. Yes, zur, when one aw um ware here one deay, I ware caal'd up for zomething or other.

Wood. Well, why don't you go on? I am on the rack!

Jac. Don't ye look zo muortal angry, then?

Wood. Well, well, I won't, my good fellow!——There's money for thy honesty.

Jac. Well; theare aw ware———

Wood. Speak out freely; you can tell me nothing worse than I imagine; you won't shock me in the least; not at all.

Jac. Well; theare aw ware pleaying on that theare music thing, like a coffin, and madam ware a zinging to un like any black-bird———

Wood. A music-master!——Is that all, booby?

[*Pushes him down.*

Jac. Yes—but 't other, zur——

Wood. Aye, I had forgot. What of him, good Jacob? what of him?

Jac. I ware never caal'd up while aw steay'd; zoa (I can't but zeay, I had a curosity to knaw what brought he here) one deay I peap'd through the keay-hoole, and zeed un—[*Titters.*] I shall ne'er forgeat———

Wood. Tell me this instant, or I shall burst with rage and suspence.

Jac. Screaping on a leetle viddle, no bigger than my hond; while madam ware a huolding out her quoats, and danzing all round the room, zoa———

[*Mimics the minuet awkwardly.*

Wood. Why, I believe the impudent bumpkin dares to jest with my misery! and yet I have no other avenue; for the rest, I fear, are knaves, and he seems only a fool.—And are these all that came, Jacob?

Jac. Noa, thare ware one moare, zur; a leetle mon in a black quoat——but aw only cuom'd now and tan.———

Wood. A disguise, no doubt! Yes, yes, they were artful enough!

Jac. And zoa, arter he'd done wi' my leady, aw did zhut hiz zelf up wi' Bridget; and zoa I ax'd her all about un, and zhe said az how aw coom'd to teach madam to turn themmin great round balls, all bleue, and red and yaller, that do stond by the books, and larned zhe to wroite.——

Wood. Yes, yes, Mrs. Bridget was in all her secrets, I don't doubt. If that fellow in black comes here again, keep him, if you value your life, and send for me.———I know not what to do or think, and must renew my search, though hopeless of success. [*Exit.*

Jac. [*Alone.*] Dang it!—But he's in a desperate teaking! —Rabbit me, but I ware muortally afeard aw un too, for aw flourish'd hiz zword az yeazy az I could a cudgel!—I do think conj'ror moight as well ha' tould me madam would ha' run away, while aw ware abeout it, and then I moight ha' run'd away first. [*Exit.*

GREY *enters.*

Grey. At length I have gained entrance into this house of shame, which now, alas! contains my darling Cecilia— Plunged in vice, and lost to every sentiment, I spent so

many anxious years in implanting. This does not seem to be the abode of pleasure, nor have I met a single being.

WOODVILLE, *entering behind, sees* Grey, *and drawing his sword, flies at, and seizes him.*

Wood. Ha!—a man!—and in black, as Jacob said.—Villain, this moment is your last.

Grey. [*Turning suddenly upon him.*] Yes, young seducer, add to the daughter's ruin, the father's murder!—Stab my heart, as you already have my happiness!

Wood. Alas! Was this her visitor? I dare not speak to him!

Grey. Embosomed by affluence, exalted by title, peace still shall be far from thy heart; for thou, with the worst kind of avarice, hast by specious pretences, wrested from poverty its last dear possession—virtue.

Wood. Pierced to the soul, as I am by your reproaches, I dare appeal to Cecilia herself for a testimony of my contrition!—How shall I convince you?

Grey. Hardly by a life of repentance.—But I debase myself to exchange a word with you. Give me back my Cecilia!—Ruined as she is, I yet would recover her!—Give her back then to a father you first taught her to fear, and an habitation, too humble for any but the good to be happy in.

Wood. Alas, sir! Can you trifle with my misery?—Do you give her back to the wretch who cannot survive her loss! Let me owe her hand to your bounty, though her heart to her own!—Did you know what this elopement of her's has cost me———

Grey. Oh!—Most accomplished villain!—but think not to dupe me too!

Wood. Who but you can have robbed me of her since morning.

Grey. Shallow artifice!

Wood. Hear me, sir! and even believe me, when I solemnly swear I have deeply repented my crime, and offered her all the reparation in my power; but, since then——

Grey. What since then?

Wood. Either by your means, or some other, she has fled!

Grey. Impossible!

Wood. 'T is too true, by Heaven!

Grey. Perhaps, while you are thus ingeniously deluding me, she indeed flies.—Study some other deception, while I examine the whole house, for nothing else can convince me. [*Exit.*

Wood. [*Alone.*] Surely this injured venerable man was sent by Heaven to complete my misfortunes! My passions subside but only into a vague horror and despondency, even more dreadful! If with rash hand she has shortened her days, what remain of mine will be, indeed all her father predicts [*Walking by the toilet.*] Ha, a letter!

GREY *re-enters.*

Grey. A total loneliness in the house!

Wood. Now, sir, be convinced.—I have just found a letter from her.

Grey. This cannot be the invention of a moment;—let me read it——it is indeed her hand——[*Opens and reads it.*

'Receive this as my last farewell.——Providence has unexpectedly sent me a friend, whose protection I dare accept; and time may perhaps subdue a passion which seems interwoven with my being. Forget me, I entreat; and seek that happiness with another, I can never hope to bestow or partake. Consoled only by reflecting, that the grief my error occasions, is inferior to that I should have felt, had I, by an

ungenerous use of my power, made you, in turn, my victim. ——Once more, adieu!———All search will certainly be fruitless.

P. S. 'In the cabinet you will find your valuable presents; and the key is in a dressing box.'

[Woodville *snatches the letter, and bursts into tears.*

Grey. Cecilia! I may say, with tears of joy, thou art, indeed my daughter! more dear (if possible) than ever! A daughter monarchs might contend for, though thy weak father abjures thee! May the friend you have found have a heart but like your own!——For you, young man!—But I leave you to your anguish; the loss of such a woman is a sufficient punishment.

Wood. Stay, sir! [*Rises.*] by your holy profession, I conjure you, stay!—Plunge me not into total despair!—Though without a clue to her asylum, I would fain believe my heart will lead me to it; and let me then hope you will bestow her on me!

Grey. There is a something in your manner, young gentleman, that affects me.—I have been young, wild, and extravagant, myself; and what is more strange, have not forgot I was so: my own experience proves reformation possible; act up to her, and atone your error.

Wood. I will endeavour it, sir! and, oh! could those who yet but waver, know what has passed in my heart, during the last hour, who would dare to deviate? [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Cecilia's *House.* BRIDGET *dressed in* Cecilia's *Clothes, mixed with every thing vulgar and tawdry.*

Bridget.

So—I am ready against our gentleman comes.—Deuce on him to run away last night, the moment I was drest—and with an inferial fellow too!——Lard, how can people of quality demean themselves by keeping company with inferials!—However, one thing I am sure of, he's too much on the fidgets to stay long away from our house; and, in the mean while, I can entertain myself extremely well.

[*Sits down to the toilet.*

Jac. [*Without.*] I tell ye, my leady's not at huome.

Gov. I tell you, I won't take your word for it;—so come, my lord, and see.

Brid. Hey-day, my lord! What's the news now, I wonder?

Lord GLENMORE *and the* GOVERNOR *enter; both stop short.*

Gov. Oh, I thought madam had learnt enough of the *ton* to lie by proxy!

Brid. Dear heart!—I am all of a twitteration!——Who can these be?—That's my lord, for certain!

L. *Glen.* The vulgarity of the wench is astonishing!

Gov. ——Um—why, a little gawky, or so——there's no denying it. [*Aside.*] Here's a pretty discovery, now, after all my projects! Thank Fortune, the secret is yet my own, though.

L. *Glen.* [*Advancing to her.*] I ought to beg your excuse, madam, for so abrupt an intrusion; but the opportunity and

so fair a temptation, will, I flatter myself, be a sufficient apology.

Brid. [*Aside.*] He takes me for my lady, that's a sure thing!——Oh, this is charming!——You need not make no 'pologys, my lord; inferials never knows how to suspect people of quality; but I understands good breeding better.

L. *Glen.* [*Aside.*] Why, what a barn-door mawkin it is!—Your politeness, madam, can only be equalled by your beauty!

Brid. Dear heart, my lord, you flatter me!——Won't you please to sit?

[*Waits affectedly till they consent to seat themselves.*

L. *Glen.* [*To the* Governor.] Surely by using my title, she knows me!

Gov. Zounds! I have a great mind to make her know me! Od! I shall never be able to contain!

L. *Glen.* I was afraid, madam, I should prove an unwelcome guest—but beauty like yours———

Brid. Does your lordship think I so very handsome, then?——Lard, how lucky was my dressing myself!

L. *Glen.* [*Aside.*] Affected ideot!—I was afraid, madam, too, of meeting Woodville here. [*Aside.*] I know not what to say to her.

Brid. He has not been here this morning; but, if he had, he knows better than to ax arter my company, I do assure you, my—lordship.

L. *Glen.* I have been told he intends marrying you; what a pity to monopolize such merit!

Brid. If he has any such kind intention, 'tis more than I knows of, I assure you.

L. *Glen.* His keeping that wise resolution from you, is some little comfort, however.

Brid. But, I promise ye, I shall make a rare person of

quality; for I loves cards, coaches, dancing, and dress, to my very heart—nothing in the world better—but blind-man's-buff. I had some thoughts of taking a trip to Sadler's Wells or Fox-hall, but they don't begin till five o'clock.

Gov. [*Aside.*] Ha! ha! though she can hardly spell out the Ten Commandments, she could break every one with as much ease and impudence, as if she had been bred in the circle of St. James's.

L. *Glen.* But, madam, you know, allowing Woodville willing to marry you, it is not in his power while his father lives, without forfeiting his fortune, the value of which you doubtless understand?

Brid. Oh, yes, yes, for sartin, my lord.

L. *Glen.* Who knows too how far an incensed parent may carry his resentment?—He might find means to entrap and punish you.

Brid. Ha, ha, ha!—he entrap me!—that would be a good jest! No, no, I have more of the lady of quality than to be so easily catched.

Gov. [*Mimicking her.*] He, he, he! that is the only particular in which you have nothing at all of the lady of quality.

L. *Glen.* With me you may share a higher rank and larger fortune without those fears—I am of an age——

Brid. Yes, one may see that without being a conjuror.—Why, will you marry me, my lord?

L. *Glen.* Convince me that you don't love this Woodville, and I know not how far my passion may carry me.

Brid. Love him! Do you think I knows no more of high life than that comes to? To be sure, he is a sweet pretty man, and all that——But as to love, I loves nobody half so well as myself!

L. *Glen.* Upon my soul I believe you; and wish he had

the whole benefit of the declaration. [*To the* Governor.] Her ingratitude is as shocking as her ignorance, and Bridewell too gentle a punishment.

Gov. Then build a Bridewell large enough to contain the whole sex; for the only difference between her and the rest is—this country mawkin *tells* what the town-bred misses *conceal.*

L. *Glen.* Why, Governor, you are as testy as if you had the care of her education.

Gov. I the care!---Zounds, what I say is merely from friendship to your lordship. I hate to see you deceive yourself. [*Aside.*] Surely he can never suspect!

[Bridget *is employed in cramming trinkets from the dressing-table into her pockets.*

Brid. Now I am ready to go, my lord.

L. *Glen.* Reflect, madam; it would hurt me to have you say I deceived you——If you should repent——I am much afraid you will.

Brid. What, when I am a lady? Oh, I'll venture that, and attend you.

Gov. [*Roughly snatching her other hand.*] To where you little dream of, you vain, affected, presuming, ignorant baggage.

Brid. Hey-day!---my lord!

L. *Glen.* Appeal not to me, base woman!---Know I am the father of that poor dupe, Woodville.

Brid. Dear heart! be ye, indeed?——What will become of me, then?

L. *Glen.* And, as a moderate punishment for your hypocrisy, ambition, and ingratitude, sentence you to be shut up for life in a monastery.

Brid. O, Lard! among monsters?

Gov. No, ignoramus!—No, among nuns: though they are but monsters in human nature either.

Brid. What, where they'll cut off my hair, and make me wear sackcloth next my skin?

Gov. Yes, if they leave you any skin at all.

Brid. Oh dear, dear, dear! [*Sobs and groans.*] Upon my bended knees, I beg you won't send me there!——Why, I shall go mallancholly——I shall make away with myself for sartin; and my ghost will appear to you all in white.

Gov. All in black, I rather think; for the devil a speck of white is there in your whole composition.

L. *Glen.* Your conduct, wretch! justifies a severer sentence. To seduce him from his duty, was crime enough!

Brid. Who! I seduce him? I did not, my lord——indeed I did not.

L. *Glen.* Have you not owned———

Brid. No, indeed, no; that I wished to take my lady's place, I believe I did own———

Gov. Ha, ha, ha! Very prettily devised, faith, for a young beginner!—Come, come, [*Chucking her under the chin.*] we must give you credit for this, Miss——Your lady? Ha, ha, ha!

L. *Glen.* Shallow subterfuge!———

VANE *enters, and the* Slaves.

Vane, is all ready? Seize this woman, and observe my orders!

Brid. Ah, dear heart! I shall die away if the blacks do but touch me—Indeed you do mistake!—I be no lady—I be only Bridget!

Gov. I would give ten thousand pounds that you were only Bridget, you artful puss!—Zounds! though I could one moment strangle the pug's face in her own necklace, yet the next I can hardly prevail on myself to punish her—What the devil had I now to do in England? or what the devil had I ever to do in Wales?—Phew! I could dethrone

fifty Nabobs without half the fatigue and anxiety of this moment. Take her away, however; and let us try how Miss likes riding out in her own coach.

[Vane *and the Slaves seize her; she screams out and catches Lord* Glenmore's *coat, falling on her knees.*

JACOB *enters, her back to him.*

Jac. Why, what a dickens be ye all at here?——Zoa, what's my leady theare?

L. *Glen.* See there now——Oh, the artful Jezebel!

Brid. Oh, Jacob!—Why, don't ye see I am Bridget?—Pray satisfy my lord, here.

Jac. Why, be ye Bridget?——Never trust me else!

Gov. Here's a fool of t' other sex now, can hardly take a hint though so plainly given him!—Thanks to the natural difference, for art is nature in woman.

[*L.* Glen. *draws him aside.*

Jac. Auh, Bridget, Bridget! Where didst thee get theesum foine claws?—Noa, noa, as thee'st brew'd, thee meay'st beake.

Brid. Oh, do you take pity on me! Why, they be going to carry me to some outlandish place, and make a nunnery of me.

Jac. A nunnery! What's that? Any thing Cristin? Well, if I do spake to um, will ye ha'e me?

Brid. Oh, yes, yes, yes!

L. *Glen.* Brother! I shall leave you to the completion of this affair——I am sick to the soul of the gawky——

Gov. Yes, yes; I don't doubt it——I don't doubt it.

L. *Glen.* [*To* Vane.] Convey her to my house, and lock her up in one of the lofts over the stables.——Go the back way, and even the family need know nothing of the matter.

——The Chaplain will provide a licence, and be ready.—— Courage, my lad, and depend upon my gratitude! [*Exit.*

Gov. Will you take her, or no? I shall never be able to stifle my agitation, and burst with rage if I show it.——

Jac. Why, zure, zure, ye won't carr' away our Bridget?

Vane. Ha, ha, ha!

Gov. Oh, she has beat her meaning into thy thick scull at last! Pr'ythee, keep thy blockhead out of my way, if thou mean'st to keep it on thy own shoulders.

Jac. Why, be ye in arnest then? Dear heart alive! Why, this is cousin Bridget!

Brid. Only send for Mr. Woodville.

Gov. Prettily devised again! Ha, ha, ha!——Dost think, my little dear, we have lived three times as long as your ladyship to learn a quarter as much?——Send for Mr. Woodville, hey?——No, no; you won't find us quite so simple.

Jac. Oh, do an't ye, do an't ye carr' off zhe, or if ye wull, do pray take I.

Vane. Yes, you would be a choice piece of lumber, truly.

Gov. Drag her away this moment.

Brid. Oh dear, oh dear! to be hanged at last for another's crime is all that vexes me.

[*They carry her off*, Governor *follows.*

SCENE II.

Miss Mortimer's *Apartment.* CECILIA *enters and sits down to embroidery.*

Cec. How fond, how weak, how ungrateful are our hearts! Mine still will presumptuously fancy this house its home, and ally itself to every one to whom Woodville is dear.

Lord GLENMORE *enters.*

Oh, Heavens, my lord!—how unlucky! If I go, he may find the captain with Miss Mortimer!

L. *Glen.* You see, madam, you have only to retire, to engage us to pursue you even to rudeness. But, tell me, can it be your own choice to punish us so far as to prefer solitude to our society?

Cec. I know myself too well, my lord, to receive distinctions of which I am unworthy; yet think not therefore I fail in respect.

L. *Glen.* But is that charming bosom susceptible of nothing beyond respect? Why is it capable of inspiring a passion it cannot participate?

Cec. Your goodness, my lord—my profound veneration, will always attend you—but, the more generously you are inclined to forget what is due to yourself, the more strongly it is impressed on my memory.

L. *Glen.* Were what you say true, the bounties of Nature atone amply to you for the parsimony of Fortune, nor would your want of every other advantage lessen your merit, or my sense of it.

Cec. [*Aside.*] Had he thought thus a few months since, how happy had I now been!—Your approbation at once flatters and serves me, by justifying Miss Mortimer's protection of me.

L. *Glen.* Her partiality for you does her more honour than it can ever do you advantage. But you must tell me, how she gained first the happiness of knowing you?

Cec. My—my lord, by a misfortune so touching——

L. *Glen.* Nay, I would not distress you neither; yet, I own, madam, I wish to make a proposal worth a serious answer; but ought first to know, why you affect a mystery?

Tell me then, my dear, every incident of your life, and I will raise you to a title, I may without vanity say, many have aspired to!

Cec. You oppress my very soul, my lord! But, alas! unconquerable obstacles deprive me for ever of that title. Neither would I obtain it by alienating such a son from such a father.

L. *Glen.* Put him entirely out of the question; the meanness of his conduct acquits me to myself. Do you know, madam, he has resolved to marry a creature of low birth, illiterate, vulgar, and impudent? And to complete her perfections, she has been his mistress at least.

Cec. Surely he knows, and purposely shocks me thus. [*Aside.*

L. *Glen.* But your integrity does n't render you less amiable in my eyes; it greatly enhances ever other merit. As to his wretch, I have her in my power, and shall make her dearly repent.

Cec. Then I am lost, indeed! [*Aside.*] You have, my lord, though I know not how, discovered—— [*Rises in confusion.*

L. *Glen.* [*Rises, taking snuff, without looking at her.*] Oh, nothing more easy, madam; I had him carefully traced to her house; and, during his absence, took servants, and forced her away.

Cec. [*Aside.*] That, however, cannot be me; every word seems to add to a mystery I dare not inquire into.

L. *Glen.* But why waste one precious moment on such an animal? What are these unconquerable obstacles?

Cec. Spare me, my lord; your indulgence induces me to try again to soften your resolutions respecting your son: deprived of the weak, the guilty, the miserable wretch you justly condemn, a little time will (no doubt) incline him to

his duty. I should have your pardon to solicit, my lord, but that your own openness authorises mine.

L. *Glen.* But, can you, who so powerfully pleads the cause of another, be deaf to the sighs of a man who adores you? who offers you a rank——

Cec. Be satisfied, my lord, with knowing I have all that esteem your merit claims; which influences me beyond every casual advantage.

L. *Glen.* But, madam——

Cec. Alas! my lord!——[*Bursts into tears, aside.*] Be silent, if possible, both pride and virtue. I have deserved, and will submit to it—yet surely the bitterness of this moment expiates all past offences. [*Exit.*

L. *Glen.* Amiable creature! what an amazing elegance of mind and person! Tears were her only answers to my questions, and blushes to my looks; yet these only heighten a curiosity they have softened into love. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Woodville's *Apartment.* WOODVILLE *alone.*

Wood. No intelligence of my Cecilia yet!—were I only assured of her safety, it would be some consolation.

JACOB *enters.*

Jac. Zur, zur;—I do meake so bowld as to ax to spake to you.

Wood. Jacob! my honest fellow, the very sight of thee revives my hopes, and sets my heart in motion! Well, what's the news?

Jac. Zurprizing news indeed, zur!—Loord, I thought

I should never meat wi' ye; I com'd to your lodgings twice, and ye warn't up.

Wood. Up! 'sdeath, you ignorant booby! why did n't you order them to rouse me that moment?

Jac. Loord, zur! why your gentlemen (as they do caal un) ware so terrible foine, I were afeard of affronting un!

Wood. Plague on the stupidity of both, say I!——But what's all this to the purpose? the news? the news?

Jac. 'Las-a-deazy! muortal bad news, indeed!

Wood. You tedious blockhead! is your lady returned?

Jac. Noa, zur. [*Shaking his head very mournfully.*

Wood. [*Aside.*] The horrid forebodings of my heart recur; yet, surely she could not be so desperate!——Shocking as the suspense is, I more dread the certainty. Speak, however, my good fellow! [Jacob *wipes his eyes.*] I shall ever value your sensibility. Tell me then the simple truth, whatever it may be!——

Jac. I wull, zur, I wull. There has com'd two foine gentlemen, wi' zwords by their zides, just for all the world like yourn.

Wood. Well, and what did these gentlemen say?

Jac. Why, they went up stears, willy nilly, and carr'd off—our Bridget. [*Bursts out a crying.*

Wood. You impudent, ignorant clown! I'll give you cause for your tears. [*Shakes him.*

Jac. Loord! Loord!—do ye ha' a little Cristin commiseration—Well, if ever I do cuome nigh ye again, I do wish ye may break every buone in my zkin.

Wood. [*Walking about in a rage.*] To insult me with your own paltry love affairs! these great and mighty gentlemen were only constables, I dare swear, and your fears converted their staves to swords.

Jac. Ay, but that an't the worst neither. I do verily

think my turn wull cuome next; can't zleep in my bed for thinking on't, nor enjoy a meal's meat;—zo, except you do bring your zword, and cuome and live in our houze, I wull guo out on't, that's a zure thing; for I had rather sceare craws at a graat a deay all my loife long, than 'bide there to be so terrifoid.

Wood. Sceare craws, truly? why, the craws will sceare you, ye hen-hearted puppy!—There, teake that, [*Gives him money.*] and guo home, or to the devil, so you never fall in my way again.

Jac. Zome faulk that I do knaw wull zee the black gentleman first, 'tis my belief—zoa I had best keep out o' his woy too. [*Exit.*

HARCOURT *enters.*

Har. Woodville, what's the matter? Why, you will raise the neighbourhood.

JACOB *returns.*

Jac. Here's a peaper houzemaid do zend you, wi' her humble duty; but, if zo be it do put ye in another desprate teaking, I do huope ye wull zend for zhe to beat, and not I. Loord! Loord! Loord! what wull becuome of me in this woide world of London? [*Exit.*

Har. Ha! ha! ha! he is a choice fellow!

Wood. A heart oppressed with its own feelings, fears every thing. I have hardly courage to open a letter without an address.

Har. Come, come, give it to me, then. Hey, what? confusion! Was ever any thing so unlucky?

[*Attempts to tear it.*

Wood. [*Snatches it from him.*] Ha! it is important then?

Har. Why will you invent torments for yourself?——

[*Aside.*] My own letter by every thing careless——Here's a stroke——

Wood. [*Reads in a broken voice and manner.*] 'Woodville 'on the brink of marriage—You will be disengaged——A 'nobleman—(Damnation!)—Heart and fortune at her feet' —I'll let his soul out there! Hell and furies!—but I will find him, if money—Never will I close my eyes till—Oh, Cecilia—— [*Throws himself into a seat.*

Har. This is the most unforeseen—I know not what to say to him—Pr'ythee, Woodville! do not sacrifice so many reasonable presumptions in her favour, to a paper that may be a forgery, for ought you know!

Wood. Oh Charles! that I could think so!—but I have seen the villain's execrable hand somewhere! Did you never see the hand?

Har. Um—I can't but own I have—What the devil shall I say to him—— [*Aside.*

The GOVERNOR *enters.*

Gov. Woodville, my dear boy! I am come to have a little talk with thee. Charles! don't run away! you are in all your cousin's secrets.

Wood. What should possess this tiresome mortal to come here? I should have waited on you in half an hour, sir.

Gov. Ay, and that's what I wanted to avoid:—The more I talk to your father, Frank, the more I find him fixed on the match with his Miss Mortimer! Nay, he tells me, he will have you married this very day.

Wood. That's mighty probable, in the humour I am in.

Gov. Ah, Frank! the girl I offer thee——

Wood. Is no more agreeable to me than her you despise.

Gov. How do you know that, Peppercorn?—How do you know that?—od, I could tell you——

Wood. And to tell you my full mind, sir, I had rather make myself miserable to gratify my father, than any other man.

Gov. Od! thou art so obstinate, boy, I can't help loving thee.—[*Aside.*] I don't see why I am obliged to know his Miss is my daughter—I have a great mind to own what we have done with her; and, if he will marry, e'en take care nobody hinders him! then trump up a farce about forgiving them——and yet, it goes against my conscience to punish the puppy for life, though he has punished me pretty sufficiently, by the Lord Harry.

Har. I don't like this affair at all, and tremble for my Sophia, when I see this odd soul so inveterate against her.

Gov. [*To* Woodville.] Well, my lad! do you know I am as deep in all your secrets as your favourite valet-de-chambre?

Wood. I don't understand you, sir.

Gov. Pho, pho, pho! keep that face till I shew thee one as solemn as my lord's. Why should not you please yourself, and marry your Miss, instead of your father's.

Both. Astonishing!

Gov. Od, if you turn out the honest fellow I take you for, I know a pretty round sum, an onion and a black coat may one day or other entitle you to; so never mind Lord Gravity's resentment.

Wood. I act from better motives, sir, and were unworthy your wealth could it tempt me to disobey the best of fathers.

Gov. [*Passionately.*] Why then marry Miss Mortimer, and oblige him: take a back seat in your own coach, get a family of pale-faced brats, born with ostrich feathers on their heads; and hate away a long life with all due decorum!—Zounds, here's a fellow more whimsical than—

even myself. Yesterday you would have the puss, spite of every body; but, you no sooner find it in your power to oblige your best friend, by humouring your inclinations, than, lo! you are taken with a most violent fit of duty and submission! Od, you don't know what you have lost by it! But since you are bent on crossing me, I'll cross you, and once for all too—My secret shall henceforth be as impenetrable as the philosopher's stone. Ay, stare as you please, I'll give you more years, than you have seen days to guess it in. [*Exit.*

Har. What this uncle of our's can mean, is quite beyond my guess!

Wood. What signifies seeking to expound by reason, actions in which it had no share? His brain is indubitably touched! But Cecilia lies heavy on my heart, and excludes every other thought.

Har. Time may explain the secret of that letter, which, I will lay my life, she despises: A woman who did not, would have kept it from your hands.

Wood. That's true, indeed!—If I wrong her, and this was but an insult—there is a noble sincerity in her own letter which sets suspicion at defiance. If he stumbled on one word of truth during this visit, the crisis of my fate approaches. Oh, wherever thou art, if the exalted being I will still hope my Cecilia, thou shalt know that I have at least deserved thee! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A mean Room; Boots, Bridles, &c. hanging all round.— BRIDGET *sitting very mournfully, her fine Clothes in great disorder. A Table by her, with a small Roll, a Glass of Water, an old dogs-ear'd Book, and a bit of Looking-glass.*

Bridget.

DEAR heart! dear heart! what a miserable time have I passed! and where I be to pass my whole life, my lord here only knows!—I have not much stomach indeed; neither have I much breakfast.

[*Eats a bit of bread, and bursts into tears.*

The GOVERNOR *enters.*

Gov. Had I more sins to answer for, than a college of Jesuits, I surely expiate them all, by going through a purgatory in this life beyond what they have invented for the other. This vulgar maux of mine haunts my imagination, in every shape but that I hoped to see her in; I dare hardly trust myself to speak to her!—Od, I would not have the extirpation of the whole female sex depend upon my casting vote, while I am in this humour.

Brid. Mercy on me! here's that cross old gentleman again!—What will become of me?——Do, pray, strange sir, be so generous as to tell me what is next to be done with me?

Gov. Why, just whatever I please, you audacious baggage! [*Aside.*]——Od, now I think on't, I have a great mind to try a few soft words, and dive into all the secrets of the little ignoramus.——Come, suppose I had a mind to grant you your freedom, how would you requite me?

Brid. Dear heart! why, I 'd love you for ever and ever.

Gov. Zounds, that 's a favour I could very readily dispense with; and yet 't is natural to the poor wench.—Ah! if thou hadst been a good girl, thou hadst been a happy one. ——Hark ye, Miss! confess all your sins; that 's the only way to escape, I promise you! and if you conceal the least, I 'll——do, I don't know what I 'll do to you.

Brid. I will, I will, sir, indeed, as I hope to be married.

Gov. Married, you slut!—Bad as that is, it 's too good for you. Come, tell me all your adventures.—Describe the behaviour of the young villain who seduced you. Where did you see him first?

Brid. Ugh, ugh—at church, sir.

Gov. At church, quotha!—a pretty place to commence an intrigue in!—And how long was it before you came to this admirable agreement?

Brid. Umh—Why—Sunday was Midsummer eve, and Sunday after was madam's wedding-day, and Monday was our fair, and——

Gov. Oh, curse your long histories!—And what then said Woodville?

Brid. Oh, Lord, nothing at all.—Why, it war n't he.

Gov. No! [*Ready to burst with passion.*]—Who, who, who?—Tell me that, and quite distract me.

Brid. Timothy Hobbs, 'squire's gardener.

Gov. An absolute clown! [*Walks about, half groaning with rage and disappointment.*]——Who, oh! who would be a father? I could laugh, cry, die, with shame and anger! since the man, who corrupted, left her only one virtue, would he had deprived her of that too!—Oh, that she had but skill enough to lye well!

Brid. Whether I can or no, I 'll never speak truth again, that 's a sure thing. What do I get by it, or any poor soul of the female kind?

Gov. I am incapable of thinking; every plan, every resource thus overturned. I must be wiser than all the world. This fool's head of mine must take to teaching, truly! as if I could eradicate the stamp of nature, or regulate the senses by any thing but reason. Don't pipe, baggage, to me!—you all can do that, when too late:—When I have considered whether I shall hang myself or not, I'll let you know whether I shall tuck you up along with me, you little wretch, you. [*Exit.*

Brid. [*Alone.*] Well, sure I have at last guessed where I am shut up—it must be Bedlam; for the old gentleman is out of his mind, that's a sure thing.

VANE *enters.*

Vane. Ha, ha, ha! my future father-in-law seems to have got a quietus of my intended; and, faith, so would any man who was not in love with a certain forty thousand; to be sure, in plain English, she is a glorious mawkin.—[*To her.*] Well, madam, how are you pleased with your present mode of living?

Brid. Living, do you call it? I think 'tis only starving. Why, I shall eat my way through the walls, very shortly.

Vane. Faith, Miss, they use you but so so, that's the truth on't; and I must repeat, even to your face, what I said to my lord, that your youth, beauty, and accomplishments, deserve a better fate.

Brid. Dear heart! Bedlam, did I say I was in!—Why, I never knew a more sensibler, genteeler, prettier sort of a man in my life. [*Aside.*]—I am sure, sir, if I was to study for seven years, I should never know what I have done to discommode them, not I.

Vane. Oh, Lard, my dear! only what is done every day by half your sex without punishment.—However, you are to suffer for all, it seems.—You see your fare for life!—a

dungeon, coarse rags, and the same handsome allowance of bread and water twice a day.

Brid. Oh, dear me!——Why, I shall be an otomy in a week!

Vane. And an old black to guard you, more sulky and hideous than those in the Arabian Nights Entertainments.

Brid. Why, sure they will let you come and see me, sir? I shall certainly swound away every time I look at that nasty old black.

Vane. This is the last time your dungeon (which your presence renders a palace to me) will ever be open to one visitor—unless—unless—I could contrive—but no, it would be my ruin:—Yet who would n't venture something for such a charming creature? you could endear even ruin. Tell me, then, what reward you would bestow on a man who ventured all to give you freedom?

Brid. Nay, I don't know: you 're such a dear sweet soul, I sha' n't stand with you for a trifle.

Vane. Ahey! Miss will be as much too complying in a minute. [*Aside.*]——Well, then, my dear! I must marry you, or you will still be in the power of your enemies.

Brid. Hey! what! do I hear rightly? marry me!—[*Aside.*] Why, this will be the luckiest day's work I ever did!—Nay, sir, if you should be so generous, I hope I shall live to make you amends.

Vane. [*Aside.*] The only amends you can make me, is by dying; and now, my dear, I will own to you, I have the licence in my pocket, and my lord as eager as myself. Our chaplain will do us the favour with more expedition than he says grace before meat.——Well done, Vane! egad, thy lucky star predominates. [*Aside—takes her arm.*

Brid. Surely my locking up does end very comical.

[*Exeunt, arm in arm.*

SCENE II.

The Drawing-Room. Miss MORTIMER *and* Captain HARCOURT *enter.*

Miss *Mor.* Woodville is now with his father, and both in the decisive mood. Oh, Charles! as the moment approaches nearer, your influence becomes insensibly less powerful: the frantic fits of the Governor; the solemn absurdity of my lord; but, above all, the behaviour of Woodville, hurts and alarms me!—Still cautious not to offend his father, he had tried every way to extort the refusal from me; but, by a pardonable equivocation, I left him hopeless—and assured him I should, to the utmost of my power, obey my benefactor —Why, why did you marry one, who could give you nothing but her heart!

Har. I shall not answer, till you can name me an equivalent —Trust to my management, my dear Sophia. I still flatter myself, one storm will settle the tenor of our lives—If not, while acquitted to Heaven, the world, and ourselves, we may struggle with spirit against fortune, and sometimes owe our dearest enjoyments to her fluctuations.

Miss *Mor.* By sentiments like these you won my very soul; and to retain for ever a heart so invaluable, I have ventured the displeasure of my benefactor: but our hearts will not always follow the lead of our reason, nor, when I consider the cause, can I repent the deviation of mine.

Har. Think, if you pity yourself, what you can give to Cecilia; and fortify her mind against too strong a sense of her frailty.——For my part, I must watch whatever is going on.

Miss *Mor.* So you leave me out of the plot? Well, if it ends happily, I shall be contented; and, like the world,

measuring your merit by your success, will declare you a most inimitable schemer. Adieu!

Har. Nay, stay a moment.

Miss *Mor.* Not for the world; for here comes your uncle, with a face more petrifying than Medusa's. [*Exit.*

The GOVERNOR *enters, musing.*

Gov. I have lived fifty-eight years, five months, and certain odd days, to find out I am a fool at last; but I will live as many more, before I add the discovery that I am a knave too.

Har. What the devil can he be now hatching?—Mischief, I fear?

Gov. Dear Fortune! let me escape this once undiscovered, and I compound for all the rest.—Charles! the news of the house? for the politics of this family are employment for every individual in it.

Har. Bella, horrida bella, sir!—My lord is determined to bring his son's duty to an immediate test——[*Aside.*]—Thanks to his friend's schemes and his mistress's beauty.

Gov. What poor malicious wretches are we by nature!—Zounds, if I could not find in my heart to rejoice at thinking every one here will be as mortified and disappointed as a certain person that shall be nameless. So, so, here they come, faith, to argue the point in open court.

Lord GLENMORE *enters, followed by* WOODVILLE.

L. *Glen.* Without this proof of your obedience, all you can urge, sir, is ineffectual.

Wood. While obedience was possible, I never swerv'd, my lord; but, when you command me to make myself wretched, a superior duty cancels that: already bound by a volun-

tary, an everlasting vow, I cannot break it without offending Heaven, nor keep it without offending you.

Gov. [*Aside.*] What's this? Chop'd about again!

Wood. Did you once know the incomparable merits of my love, even your lordship's prejudices must give way to your reason.

L. *Glen.* Mere dotage. Does n't her conduct equally evince her folly and depravity?

Wood. Covered as I ought to be, with confusion and remorse, I will own she was seduced and deceived.

Gov. [*Aside.*] Ah, poor boy! one of the two was woefully deceived, sure enough.

L. *Glen.* Oh, your conscience may be very easy on that account; it could not require much art to deceive such an ideot.

Gov. No, no, my lord! Why paint the devil blacker than he is? Not an ideot neither.

Wood. Sir, my father's freedom of speech I must endure; but your's———

Gov. You must endure too, young sir, or I shall bite my tongue off.

Wood. But, my lord! that dear unhappy girl is no longer a subject of debate. She evidently proves her merit by her flight.

L. *Glen.* Would you make a virtue from not doing ill, when it is no longer in your power? Woodville! I was once weak enough to believe indulgence the surest way of obtaining your duty and esteem. My eyes are at last opened. Miss Mortimer is worthy a better husband; but you are her's, or no son of mine.—I solemnly promised this to her dying father, and will acquit myself at all events.

Wood. Can you resolve to sacrifice me to a promise made before we could judge of each other?—You never felt, sir,

the compulsion you practice. Will you dissolve the first band of morality; and see your highly estimated title end in me? for never will I on these terms continue it.

L. *Glen.* I almost wish I had never had continued it.—[*Walks in anger.*] I am determined, Woodville! and nothing but Miss Mortimer's refusal can break the match.

Wood. I shall not put that in her power, my lord.—Permit me to tell you, no son was ever more sensible of a father's kindness; but, if I can purchase its continuance only with my honour and my happiness, it would be too dearly bought.

L. *Glen.* 'T is well, sir.—I have listened to you sufficiently. Now, hear me. Know, this worthless wretch you prefer to your duty, is in my power; nay, in this house.

Har. [*Aside.*] The devil she is! How in the name of ill-luck should he find that out! My fine scheme is entirely blown up, by Jupiter!

Wood. Why play thus upon me, my lord?—Her letter—

L. *Glen.* What, has she wrote to you?——That I was not aware of, nor indeed suspected she could write.

Gov No, not so ignorant as that neither. I ordered she should write too!

L. *Glen.* You ordered she should write?—let me tell you, sir, it was wronging my confidence!

Gov. No, I did not order she should write;——I mean ——I mean——Zounds! I don't know what I mean!

Wood. So it seems, indeed, since hardly half an hour ago my uncle himself persuaded me to marry my love.

Gov. Here's a cursed affair now.

L. *Glen.* Can this be possible? Let me tell you, Governor, if presuming upon your wealth, you play a double part in my family——

Gov. Zounds! nobody knows his own part in your fa-

mily, that I see! and this fellow too, to teize me, whom I loved above all in it. Why, I spoke entirely from regard to him. If since then I have discovered a bumpkin was before-hand with him in the possession of his Miss.——

Wood. If any one, beside yourself, sir, durst tell such a falsehood, it would cost a life.

Gov. Yes; and, if any one beside myself durst tell me such a truth, it would cost a soul perhaps. [*Exit.*

Har. This is more unintelligible than all the rest.

L. *Glen.* To end these altercations;—upon yourself, Woodville, shall depend the fortune of this wretch to whom you have been so gross a dupe as to justify the imputation of folly. Why, even without knowing me, she ridiculed your passion, and offered to leave you.

Wood. Impossible!

L. *Glen.* Dare you disbelieve me, sir?——nay, she shall be produced, and obliged to confess her arts;—then blush and obey!——Here, Vane! Governor! the keys! [*Exit.*

[Woodville *walks behind in great agitation.*

Har. Now could I find in my heart to make this story into a ballad, as a warning to all meddling puppies; and then hang myself, that it may conclude with a grace. Zounds, he must be endowed with supernatural intelligence. Just when I was saying a thousand civil things to myself on my success, to have my mine sprung before my eyes by the enemy; and instead of serving my friend and myself, become a mere tool to old Gravity's revenge! 'Pshaw! however, we must make the best of a bad matter.—Woodville, what do'st mean to do, man.

Wood. Let them produce my Cecilia!——I will then seize and protect her to the last moment of my life.

Har. And I will assist you to the last moment of mine.

Wood. My generous cousin! this is indeed friendship.

Har. Not so very generous, if you knew all.

Lord GLENMORE *and the* GOVERNOR, *with* BRIDGET *re-enter, holding a Handkerchief to her eyes,* VANE *following;* Woodville *flies and clasps her in his arms;* Harcourt *takes her hand.*

Wood. My love! my life!——do I once again behold thee?—fear nothing!—you here are safe from all the world!—will you not bless me with one look?

Brid. [*Looking at him and* Harcourt *with ridiculous distress.*] Oh, dear me!

L. *Glen.* I have put it out of your power to marry, sir, otherwise you may take her.

Wood. Take her!——What poor farce is this?

Har. Hey-day! more incomprehensibilities.

Vane. [*Aside.*] Now for the eclaircissement—since, if the Governor does n't acknowledge her in his first rage and confusion, I may never be able to make him!—I humbly hope Mr. Woodville will pardon me, if, with her own consent and my lord's, I this morning married this young lady.

Gov. Zounds, you dog, what's that?—you married her?—Why, how did you dare?——And you too, my lord!—What the devil, did you consent to this?

Vane. Believe me, sir, I did n't then know she was your daughter.

L. *Glen.* Daughter!

Gov. So, its out, after all:—Its a lie, you dog! you did know she was my daughter;—you all knew it;—you all conspired to torment me!

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Gov. Ha, ha, ha! confound your mirth!—as if I had not plagues enough already. And you have great reason to grin too, my lord, when you have thrown my gawky on your impudent valet.

L. *Glen.* Who could ever have dreamt of—ha, ha, ha!—of finding this your little wonder of the country, brother?

Har. Nay, my lord, she 's the little wonder of the town, too.

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Gov. Mighty well—mighty well—mighty well; pray, take your whole laugh out, good folks; since this is, positively, the last time of my entertaining you in this manner.——A cottage shall henceforth be her portion, and a rope mine.

Brid. If you are my papa, I think you might give some better proof of your kindness;—but I sha' n't stir; Why, I married on purpose that I might not care for you.

Gov. Why, thou eternal torment! my original sin!—whose first fault was the greatest frailty of woman; and whose second, her greatest folly! do'st thou, or the designing knave who has entrapped thee merely for that purpose, imagine my wealth shall ever reward incontinence and ingratitude?—no; go knit stockings to some regiment; where he is preferred to be drummer!——warm yourself when the sun shines!—soak every hard-earned crust in your own tears, and repent at leisure. [*Exit in a rage.*

All. Ha, ha, ha!

L. *Glen.* He to ridicule my mode of education!——But what is the meaning of all this?

Wood. Truly, my lord, I believe it would be very hard to find any for either my uncle's words or actions——I am equally at a loss to guess as to Bridget here.

Vane. Hey, what? Bridget, did you say, sir? Why you little ugly witch, are you really Bridget?

Brid. Why I told you so all along; but you would not believe me.

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Brid. Oh, dear heart!—I am now as much afeard of my new husband as father.

L. *Glen.* For thee, wench——

Brid. [*Pops upon her knees.*] Oh, no more locking up, for goodness sake, my lord—I be sick enough of passing for a lady: but, if old scratch ever puts such a trick again in my head, I hope—your lordship will catch me! that's all.

[*Exit.*

Vane. I shall run distracted! have I married an——and all for nothing too?

L. *Glen.* A punishment peculiarly just, as it results from abusing my confidence——Hence, wretch, nor ever while you live appear again in my presence.

[*Exit* Vane, *looking furiously after* Bridget.

L. *Glen.* 'T is time to return to ourselves. We shall soon come to a eclaircissement, Woodville;——Since you won't marry, I will.

Wood. My lord!

L. *Glen.* And you shall judge of my choice. [*Exit.*

Har. Now for it; whatever devil diverts himself among us to day, I see he owes my sagacious lord here a grudge, as well as the rest; and I foresee that his wife and the Governor's daughter will prove equally entertaining.

Lord GLENMORE *enters, leading* CECILIA, *followed by* Miss MORTIMER.

L. *Glen.* This lady, sir, I have selected; a worthy choice.

Wood. I dream, surely!——that lady your choice?——your's!

L. *Glen.* Ungrateful son! had such been yours——

Wood. Why, this very angel is mine, my Cecilia, my first, my only love.

L. *Glen.* How!

Cec. Yes, my lord!—you now know the unhappy object at once of your resentment, contempt, and admiration! my

own misfortunes I had learnt to bear, but those of Woodville overpower me!——I deliver myself up to your justice; content to be every way his victim, so I am not his ruin.

L. *Glen.* But to find you in this house———

Cec. Your generous nephew and the amiable Miss Mortimer distinguished me with the only asylum could shelter me from your son!

L. *Glen.* They distinguished themselves!——Oh, Woodville! did I think an hour ago I could be more angry with you?——How durst you warp a mind so noble?

Wood. It is a crime my life cannot expiate,—yet, if the sincerest anguish———

L. *Glen.* I have one act of justice still in my power;—my prejudice in favour of birth, and even a stronger prejudice, is corrected by this lovely girl:——of her goodness of heart, and greatness of mind, I have had incontestible proofs, and, if I thought you, Frank———

Cec. Yet stay, my lord! nor kill me with too much kindness. Once your generosity might have made me happy, now only miserable.—My reason, my pride, nay, even my love, induces me to refuse as the only way to prove I deserve him!—he has taught me to know the world too late, nor will I retort on him the contempt I have incurred.——Mr. Woodville will tell you whether I have not solemnly vowed———

Wood. Not to accept me without the consent of both fathers; and if mine consents, what doubt——

Gov. [*Without.*] Stop that old man! stop that mad parson! stop him!

GREY *without.*

Grey. Nothing shall stop me in pursuit of my—[*Enters.*]

Ha! she is—she is here indeed! Providence has at length directed me to her. [*Runs to* Cecilia.

Cec. My father! covered with shame let me sink before you.

L. *Glen.* and *Har.* Her father!

GOVERNOR *enters.*

Grey. Rise, my glorious girl! rise purified and forgiven! rise to pity with me the weak minds that know not all thy value, and venerate the noble ones that do.

Gov. Hey! is it possible! Grey, is this my——

Grey. Yes, sir; this is your Cecilia, my Cecilia, the object of your avowed rejection and contempt!

Gov. Rejection and contempt! stand out of the way—let me embrace my daughter—let me take her once more to my heart. [*Runs and embraces her.*

L. *Glen.* His daughter!

Gov. Yes, my friend, this is really my daughter—my own Cecilia, as sure as I am an old fool after being a young one, this good girl has a right to call me by the name of father.—Has n't she, Grey?—Why, my lord, this is the very parson I told you of?——[*Taking* Cecilia's *arm under his.*] and now, young sir, what do you say to your uncle's freaks?

Wood. Say, sir? that had you ten thousand such, I would go through a patriarchal servitude, in hopes of Cecilia's hand for my reward.

Gov. And, had I ten millions of money, and this only girl, thou should'st have her, and that, too, for thy noble freedom!—And what says my Cecilia to her father's first gift?

Cec. Astonishment and pleasure leave me hardly power to say, that a disobedience to you, sir, would only double my fault; nor to worship that Heaven, which has led me through

such a trial, to such a reward! Take all I have left myself to give you, Woodville, in my hand.———

[Woodville *kisses first her hand, and then herself.*

Grey. Now, let me die, my darling child! since I have seen thee once more innocent, and happy.

Gov. And now, kiss me, my Cecilia!—Kiss me! Od! Miss Mortimer shall kiss me too, for loving my poor girl here!—Kiss me, all of you, old and young! Men, women, and children! Od, I am so overjoyed, I dread the consequences.——D' ye hear, there?——Fetch me a surgeon and a bottle of wine!———I must both empty and fill my veins on this occasion! Zooks, I could find in my heart to frisk it merrily in defiance of the gout, and take that cursed vixen below, whoever she is, for my partner!

L. *Glen.* Methinks all seem rewarded, but my poor Sophia here; and her protection of Cecilia deserves the highest recompence!—But whenever, my dear, you can present me the husband of your choice, I will present him with a fortune fit for my daughter.

Gov. Protect Cecilia!—Od! she is a good girl, and a charming girl, and I honour the very tip of her feathers now!—If she could but fancy our Charles, I'd throw in something pretty on his side, I promise you.

Miss *Mor.* Frankness is the fashion. What would you say, sir, and you, my lord, if I had fancied your Charles so much, as to make him mine already?

Gov. Hey-day! more discoveries!—How 's this, boy?

Har. Even so, sir, indeed.

L. *Glen.* It completes my satisfaction.

Gov. Od, brother! who'd have thought you in the right all the while?—We'll never separate again by the Lord Harry! But knock down our Welch friend's old house, and raise him one on the ruins, large enough to contain the whole

family of us, where he shall reign sole sovereign over all our future little Woodvilles and Cecilias.

Cec. Oppressed with wonder, pleasure, gratitude, I must endeavour to forgive myself, when Heaven thus graciously proves its forgiveness, in allying me to every human being my heart distinguishes.

Grey. Yes, my Cecilia, you may believe him, who never gave you a bad lesson, that you are now most truly entitled to esteem; since it requires a far greater exertion to stop your course down the hill of vice, than to toil slowly up toward virtue. [*Exeunt omnes.*

THE END.

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ELFRIDA,

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF

THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

BY WILLIAM MASON, A. M.

AUTHOR OF CARACTACUS.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN,

IN THE YEAR 1773.

The Lines distinguished by single inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR, AND UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

GEORGE CAWTHORN, BRITISH LIBRARY, STRAND.

1796.

BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE division of the following excellent Poem into Acts, with all other particulars, specifying the manner wherein it was represented at Covent-Garden Theatre, is in this Edition pointed out, without the smallest injury to the original text; such passages as are varied or omitted in the performance being marked by inverted commas.---For the precision wherewith this is executed, the present Editor acknowledges himself obliged to Mr. Hull, who, from his high respect for the Author, very readily undertook it.

THE ARGUMENT.

EDGAR King of England, having heard the beauty of Elfrida, daughter of Orgar, Earl of Devonshire, highly celebrated, sent his favourite minister Athelwold to her father's castle, to discover whether she was really so beautiful, as Fame reported her to be; and, if she was, to offer her his Crown in marriage. Athelwold, on seeing her, fell violently in love with her himself; and married her; conveying her soon after to his own castle in Harewood Forest, where he visited her, by stealth from court; and in his absence left her with a train of British Virgins, who form the Chorus. After three months, Orgar disapproving this confinement of his daughter, came disguised to Harewood to discover the cause of it. His arrival opens the Drama.— The incidents, which are produced by Athelwold's return from court (who was absent when Orgar came to his castle) and afterwards by the unexpected visit of the King, form the Episode of the Tragedy; the feigned pardon of Athelwold, drawn from the King by the earnest intercessions of Elfrida, brings on the Peripeteia, or change of fortune; and the single combat between the King and Athelwold, in which the latter is slain, occasions Elfrida to take the vow, which completes the Catastrophe.

Dramatis Personæ.

Men.

ORGAR, Earl of Devonshire, ... Mr. Clarke.
ATHELWOLD, Husband to ELFRIDA, . . . Mr. Smith.
EDWIN, ... Mr. Hull.
EDGAR, King of England, ... Mr. Bensley.

Women.

ELFRIDA, Daughter to ORGAR, ... Mrs. Hartley.
ALBINA, ... Mrs. Mattocks.
CHORUS of British Virgins.

ORGAR, disguised in a Peasant's Habit, speaks the Prologue.

Scene, *a Lawn before Athelwold's Castle in Harewood Forest, which continues during the whole performance.*

Those passages distinguished by *double* inverted commas, are musically performed.

7 JU 52

Roberts del. Lowry fc.

Mr. HARTLEY as ELFRIDA.

To change my Virgins, this sweet child of Summer
should in its bosom
hide such pollution ———

London Printed for S. Cawthorn, British Library Strand Nov 12 1793

Stothard del. London, Printed for J. Cawthorn, British Library, Strand, Nov. 12. 1788. Heath sc.

7 ЛУ 52

ELFRIDA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ORGAR *enters.*

Orgar.

How nobly does this venerable wood,
Gilt with the glories of the orient sun,
Embosom yon fair mansion! ‘ The soft air
‘ Salutes me with most cool and temp’rate breath;
‘ And, as I tread, the flow’r-besprinkled lawn
‘ Sends up a gale of fragrance.’ I should guess,
If e’er Content deign’d visit mortal clime,
This was her place of dearest residence.
‘ Grant Heav’n! I find it such.’ ’Tis now three months,
Since first Earl Athelwold espous’d my daughter.
He then besought me, for some little space
The nuptials might be secret; ‘ many reasons,
‘ He said, induc’d to this: I made no pause,
‘ But, resting on his prudence, to his will
‘ Gave absolute concurrence.’ Soon as married,
He to this secret seat convey’d Elfrida;
Convey’d her as by stealth, enjoy’d, and left her:
‘ Yet not without I know not what excuse
‘ Of call to court, of Edgar’s royal friendship,

'And England's welfare. To his prince he went:'
And since, as by intelligence I gather,
He oft returns to this his cloyster'd wife;
'But ever with a privacy most studied;
'Borrowing disguises till inventive art
'Can scarce supply him with variety.'
His visits, as they're stol'n, are also short;
Seldom beyond the circuit of one sun:
Then back to court, while she his absence mourns
Full many a lonely hour. I brook not this.
Had Athelwold espous'd some base-born peasant,
This usage had been apt: but when he took
My daughter to his arms, he took a virgin,
Thro' whose rich veins the blood of British Kings
Ran in unsullied stream. 'Her lineage sure
'Might give her place and notice with the noblest
'In Edgar's court. Elfrida's beauty too
'(I speak not from a father's foolish fondness)
'Would shine amid the fairest, and reflect
'No vulgar glory on that beauty's master.
'This act bespeaks the madman. Who, that own'd
'An em'rald, jasper, or rich chrysolite,
'Would hide its lustre, or not bid it blaze
'Conspicuous on his brow?' Haply, Athelwold
May have espous'd some other. 'Sdeath, he durst not.
'My former feats in arms must have inform'd him,
'That Orgar, while he liv'd, would never prove
'A traitor to his honour.' If he has——
This aged arm is not so much unstrung
By slack'ning years, but just revenge will brace it.
And, by yon awful heav'n—But hold, my rage.
I came to search into this matter coolly.
Hence, to conceal the Father and the Earl,

This pilgrim's staff, and scrip, and all these marks
Of vagrant poverty.

CHORUS [*Sung within.*]

" Hail to thy living light, ambrosial Morn!
" All hail thy roseat ray!"

Orgar. But hark, the sound of sweetest minstrelsy
Breaks on mine ear. The females, I suppose,
Whom Athelwold has left my child's attendants;
That, when she wails the absence of her lord,
Their lenient airs, and sprightly-fancied songs,
May steal away her woes. See, they approach:
This grove shall shroud me till they cease their strain;
Then I'll address them with some feigned tale.

[*He retires.*

Enter CHORUS.

ODE.

" Hail to thy living light,
" Ambrosial Morn! all hail thy roseat ray:
" That bids young Nature all her charms display
" In varied beauty bright;
' That bids each dewy-spangled flowret rise,
' And dart around its vermil dies;
' Bids silver lustre grace yon sparkling tide,
' That winding warbles down the mountain's side.
" Away, ye Goblins all,
" Wont the bewilder'd traveller to daunt;
" Whose vagrant feet have trac'd your secret haunt
" Beside some lonely wall,

'' Or shatter'd ruin of a moss-grown tow'r,
' Where, at pale midnight's stillest hour,
' Through each rough chink the solemn orb of night
' Pours momentary gleams of trembling light.
'' Away, ye Elves, away:
'' Shrink at ambrosial Morning's living ray;
' That living ray, whose pow'r benign
' Unfolds the scene of glory to our eye,
' Where, thron'd in artless majesty,
' The cherub Beauty sits on Nature's rustic shrine.'

Enter ORGAR.

Albina. Silence, my sisters. Whence this rudeness, stranger,
That thus has prompted thine unbidden ear
To listen to our strains?

Orgar. Your pardon, Virgins:
I meant not rudeness, tho' I dar'd to listen;
For ah! what ear so fortify'd and barr'd
' Against the force of powerful harmony,'
But would with transport to such sweet assailants
Surrender its attention? Never yet
Have I pass'd by the night-bird's fav'rite spray,
' What time she pours her wild and artless song,'
Without attentive pause and silent rapture;
How could I then, with savage disregard,
Hear voices tun'd by nature sweet as her's,
Grac'd with all art's addition?

Albina. Thy mean garb
And this thy courtly phrase but ill accord.
Whence, and what art thou, stranger?

Orgar. Virgins, know
These limbs have oft been wrapt in richer vest:

But what avails it now? all have their fate;
And mine has been most wretched.
' *Albina.* May we ask
' What cruel cause——
' *Orgar.* No! let this hapless breast
' Still hide the melancholy tale.'
Albina. We know,
There oft is found an avarice in grief;
And the wan eye of Sorrow loves to gaze
Upon its secret hoard of treasur'd woes
In pining solitude. Perhaps thy mind
Takes the same pensive cast: if not, permit
That we, in social sympathy, may drop
The tender tear.
' *Orgar.* Ah! ill would it become ye,
' To let the woes of such a wretch as I am
' E'er dim your bright eyes with a pitying tear.
' *Albina.* The eye, that will not weep another's sorrow,
' Should boast no gentler brightness than the glare
' That reddens in the eye-ball of the wolf.
' Let us intreat——'
Orgar. Know, Virgins, I was born
To ample property of lands and flocks,
On this side Tweeda's stream. My youth and vigour
Achiev'd full many a feat of martial prowess;
' Nor was my skill in chivalry unnoted
' In the fair volume of my sov'reign's love;
' Who ever held me in his best esteem,
' And closest to his person. When he paid,
' What all must pay, to fate; and short-liv'd Edwy
' Mounted the vacant throne, which now his brother
' Fills (as loud fame reports) right royally;'
I then, unfit for pageantry and courts,

Sat down in peace among my faithful vassals,
At my paternal seat. But ah! not long
Had I enjoy'd the sweets of that recess,
Ere by the savage inroads of base hinds,
That sallied frequent from the Scottish heights,
My lands were all laid waste, my people murder'd;
And I, through impotence of age unfit
To quell their brutal rage, was forc'd to drag
My mis'ries through the land, a friendless wand'rer.

Albina. We pity and condole thy wretched state,
But we can do no more: which, on thy part,
Claims just returns of pity; for whose lot
Demands it more than theirs, whom fate forbids
To taste the joys of courteous charity;
'To wipe the trickling tears, which dew the cheek
'Of palsied age; to smooth its furrow'd brow,
'And pay its gray hairs each due reverence?
'Yet such delight we are forbid to taste!'
For 'tis our lord's command, that not a stranger,
However high or lowly his degree,
Have entrance at these gates.

Orgar. Who may this tyrant——

Albina. Alas, no tyrant he; 'the more our wonder
'At this harsh mandate: tenderness and pity
'Have made his breast their home.' He is a man
More apt, through inborn gentleness, to err,
In giving mercy's tide too free a course,
Than with a thrifty and illiberal hand
To circumscribe its channel. This his praise
You'll hear the general theme in Edgar's court:
For Edgar ranks him first in his high favour;
Loads him with honours, which the Earl receives,
As does the golden censer frankincense,

Only to spread a sacred gale of blessings
Around on all.

Orgar. Methinks, this pleasing portrait
Bears strong resemblance of Lord Athelwold.

Albina. Himself: no Briton but has heard his fame.

Orgar. 'Tis wondrous strange; can you conceive no cause
For this his conduct?

Albina. None, that we may trust.

Orgar. Your garbs bespeak you for the fair attendants
Of some illustrious dame, the wife, or sister
Of this dread Earl.

Albina. On this head too, old man,
We are commanded a religious silence:
'Which strictly we obey; for well we know
'Fidelity's the best, and fairest wreath,
'That can adorn a servant's brow'—Farewel,
With our best wishes; we do trespass much
To hold this open converse with a stranger.

Orgar. Stay, Virgins, stay; have ye no friendly shed,
But bord'ring on your castle, where these limbs
Might lay their load of mis'ry for an hour?
Have ye no food, however mean and homely,
Wherewith I might support declining nature?
Ev'n while I speak I find my spirits fail;
And well, full well, I know, these trembling feet,
Ere I can pace a hundred steps, will sink
Beneath their wretched burthen.

Albina. Piteous sight!
What shall we do, my sisters? To admit
This man beneath the roof, would be to scorn
The Earl's strict interdict: and yet my heart
Bleeds to behold that white, old, rev'rend head
Bow'd with such misery. Yes, we must aid him.

Hie thee, poor Pilgrim, to yon neighb'ring bow'r,
'O'er which an old oak spreads his awful arm,
'Mantled in brownest foliage, and beneath
'The ivy, gadding from th' untwisted stem,
'Curtains each verdant side.' There thou may'st rest;
There too, perchance, some of our sisterhood
May bring thee speedy sustenance.

Org. Kind Heav'n!
Reward———

Albina. Ah! stay not here to thank us,
But haste to give thine age this meet repose.
That done, we do conjure thee leave the place
With cautious secresy; for were it known,
That thus we trespass'd on our lord's command,
The consequence were fatal.

Org. Fairest Maid!
Think not I'll basely draw down punishments
On my preservers. I retire. May blessings
Show'r'd from yon fount of bliss repay your kindness.

[*Exit* Orgar.

Albina. Yes, sisters, yes, when pale distress
Implores your aiding hand,
Let not a partial faithfulness,
Let not a mortal's vain command
Urge you to break th' unalterable laws
Of heav'n-descended charity.
Ah! follow still the soft-ey'd Deity;
'For know, each path she draws,
'Along the plain of life,
'Meets at the central dome of heart-felt joy.
'Follow the soft-ey'd Deity;'
She bids ye, as ye hope for blessings, bless.
Aid then the gen'ral cause of gen'ral happiness.

AIR.

" Humanity, thy awful strain
" Shall ever greet our ear,
" Sonorous, sweet, and clear.
" And as amid the sprightly-swelling train
" Of dulcet notes, that breathe
" From flute or lyre,
" The deep base rolls its manly melody,
" Guiding the tuneful choir;

CHORUS.

" So thou, Humanity, shalt lead along
" Th' accordant passions in their moral song,
" And give our mental concert truest harmony."

Albina. But see, Elfrida comes.
'Should we again resume our former strain,
'And hail the morn that paints her waking beauties;
'Or stay her gentle bidding? Rather stay;'
For, as I think, she seems in pensive mood;
And there are times, when to the sorrowing soul
Ev'n harmony is harshness.

Enter ELFRIDA, *and attendant* Ladies.

Elf. Oh my Virgins,
With what a leaden and retarding weight
Does Expectation load the wing of Time?
Alas, how have these three dull hours crept on,
'Since first the crimson mantle of the morn
'Skirted yon gay horizon! Say, my friends,'
Have I miscounted? Did not Athelwold
At parting fix this morn for his return?
This dear long-wish'd-for morn? He did, he did,
And seal'd it with a kiss; I could not err,

And yet he comes not. 'He was wont outstrip
'The sun's most early speed, and make its rising
'To me unwish'd and needless. This delay
'Creates strange doubts and scruples in my breast.'
Courts throng with beauties, and my Athelwold
Has a soft, susceptible heart, 'as prone
'To yield its love to ev'ry sparkling eye,
'As is the musk-rose to dispense its fragrance
'To ev'ry whisp'ring breeze;' perhaps he's false,
Perhaps Elfrida's wretched.

'*Albina.* See, Elfrida,
'Ah see! how round yon branching elm the ivy
'Clasps its green folds, and poisons what supports it.
'Not less injurious to the tender shoots
'Of growing love is sickly jealousy.

'*Elf.* My mind nor pines with sickly jealousy,
'Nor triumphs in security and peace.'
Who loves, must fear; and sure who loves like me,
Must greatly fear.

Albina. Yet whence the cause? Your Earl
Has ever yet (this little breach excepted)
Been punctual to appointment. 'Did his eye
'Glow with less ardent passion when he left you,
'Than at the first blest meeting? No! I mark'd him,
'His parting glance was that of fervent love,
'And constancy unalter'd.' Do not fear him.

Elf. I should not fear him, were his present stay
The only cause. Alas, it is not so!
Why comes my Earl so secret to these arms?
Why, but because he dreads the just reproach
Of some deluded fair one? Why am I
Here shrouded up, like the pale Votarist,
Who knows no visitant, save the lone owl

'That nightly leaves his ivy-shrouded cell,
'And sails on slow wing through the cloister'd isles,
'List'ning her saintly orisons?' Why am I
Deny'd to follow my departed Lord
Whene'er his duty calls him to the palace?

Albina. Covet not that; the noblest proof of love
That Athelwold can give, is still to guard
Your beauties from the blast of courtly gales.
'The crimson blush of virgin modesty,
'The delicate soft tints of innocence
'There all fly off, and leave no boast behind
'But well-rang'd, faded features.' Ah! Elfrida,
Should you be doom'd, which happier fate forbid!
To drag your hours through all that nauseous scene
Of pageantry and vice; your purer breast,
True to it's virtuous relish, soon would heave
A fervent sigh for innocence and Harewood.

Elf. You much mistake me, Virgins; the throng'd palace
Were undesir'd by me, did not that palace
Detain my Athelwold. If he were here,
His presence would convert this range of oaks
To stately columns; these gay-liv'ried flow'rs
To troops of gallant ladies; and yon deer,
That jut their antlers forth in sportive fray,
To armed knights at joust or tournament.
If Athelwold dwelt here; if no ambition
Could lure his steps from love, and this still forest;
'If I might never moan his time of absence,
'Longer than that which serv'd him for the chase
'Or of the wolf, or stag; or when he bore
'The hood-wink'd falcon forth; might these, my Virgins,
'And these alone, be love's short intervals,'
I should not have one thought remote from Harewood.

'*Albina*. And would you wish that Athelwold should slight
The weal of England, ' and on these light toys
' Waste his unvalued hours? No, fond Elfrida;
' His active soul is wing'd for nobler flights.
' *Elf*. What then, must England's welfare hold my Earl
' For ever from these shades?
' *Albina*. We say not that.
' The youth who bathes in pleasure's tempting stream
' At well judg'd intervals, feels all his soul
' Nerv'd with recruited strength; but if too oft
' He swims in sportive mazes through the flood,
' It chills his languid virtue. For this cause'
Your Earl forbids, that these enchanting groves
And their fair mistress should possess him wholly.
He knows he has a country and a king,
That claim his first attention; yet be sure,
'Twill not be long, ere his unbending mind
Shall lose in sweet oblivion ev'ry care,
Among th' embow'ring shades that veil Elfrida.
Elf. Oh, be that spech prophetic; may he soon
Seek these embow'ring shades! Meanwhile, my friends,
Sooth me with harmony. I know, full well,
That ye were nurs'd in Cornwall's wizard caves,
And oft have pac'd the fairy peopled vales
Of Devon, where posterity retains
Some vein of that old minstrelsy, which breath'd
Through each time-honour'd grove of British oak.
There, where the spreading consecrated boughs
Fed the sage misletoe, the holy Druids
Lay rapt in moral musings; while the Bards
Call'd from their solemn harps such lofty airs,
As drew down Fancy from the realms of Light
To paint some radiant vision on their minds,

Of high mysterious import. But on me
Such strains sublime were wasted: I but ask
A sprightly song to speed the lazy flight
Of these dull hours. And Music sure can find
A magic spell to make them skim their round,
Swift as the swallow circles. Try its power:
While I, from yonder hillock, watch his coming.

[*Exit* Elfrida.

ODE.

AIR.

" The turtle tells her plaintive tale,
" Sequester'd in some *lonely* vale;
" The lark in radiant ether floats,
" And swells his wild exstatic notes;
" Meanwhile on yonder hawthorn spray
" The linnet wakes her temp'rate lay;
' She haunts no solitary shade,
' She flutters o'er no sun-shine mead,
" No love-lorn griefs depress her song,
' No raptures lift it loudly high,
" But soft she trills, amid th' aerial throng,
' Smooth simple strains of sob'rest harmony.'

CHORUS.

" Sweet bird! like thine our lay shall flow,
" Nor gaily brisk, nor sadly slow;
" For to thy note sedate, and clear,
" Content still lends a list'ning ear.
' Reclin'd this mossy bank along,
' Oft has she heard thy careless song:
' Why hears not now? What fairer grove
' From Harewood lures her devious love?

' What fairer grove than Harewood knows,
' More woodland walks, more fragrant gales,
' More shadowy bowers, inviting soft repose,
' More streams slow-wand'ring thro' her winding vales?

' Perhaps to some lone cave the rover flies,
' Where lull'd in pious peace the Hermit lies.
' For from the hall's tumultuous state,
' Where banners wave with blazon'd gold,
' There will the meek-ey'd matron oft retreat,
' And with the solemn sage high converse hold.

' There, Goddess, on the shaggy mound,
' Where tumbling torrents roar around,
' Where pendant mountains o'er your head
' Stretch their reverential shade;
' You listen, while the holy Seer
' Slowly chaunts his vespers clear;
' Or of his sparing mess partake,
' The sav'ry pulse, the wheaten cake,
' The bev'rage cool of limpid rill.
' Then, rising light, your host you bless,
' And o'er his saintly temples bland distil
' Seraphic day-dreams of heav'n's happiness.'

RECITATIVE.

" Where'er thou art, enchanting Power,
" Thou soon wilt smile in Harewood's bower:
' Soon will thy fairy feet be seen,
' Printing this dew-impearled green;
' Soon shall we mark thy gestures meek,
' Thy glitt'ring eye, and dimpled cheek,
" Among the welcome guests that move
" Attendant on the state of love.

'There, when the sov'reign leads along
'Of sports and smiles a jocund train,
'Then last, but loveliest of the lovely throng,
'Thou com'st to soften, yet secure his reign.'

AIR.

"And, hark, compleating our prophetic lay,
"The fleet hoof rattles o'er the flinty way;
"Now nearer, and now nearer sounds."

DUET *and* CHORUS.

"Avaunt! ye vain, delusive fears.
"Hark! Echo tells through Harewood's amplest bounds,
"That Love, Content, and Athelwold appears."

ACT II. SCENE I.

Continues. *Enter* ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, *and* CHORUS.

Athelwold.

LOOK ever thus; with that bright glance of joy
Thus always meet my transports. Let these arms
Thus ever fold me; and this cheek, that blooms
With all health's opening roses, press my lips,
Warm as at this blest moment.

Elf. Athelwold,
I had prepar'd me many a stern rebuke;
Had arm'd my brow with frowns, and taught my eye
Th' averted glance of coldness, which might best
Greet such a loit'ring lover: but I find,
'Twas a vain task; for this my truant heart

Forgets each lesson, which resentment taught,
And in thy sight knows only to be happy.

Athel. My best Elfrida—Heav'ns! it cannot last.
The giddy height of joy, to which I'm lifted,
Is as a hanging rock, at whose low foot
The black and beating surge of Infamy
Rolls ready to receive, and sink my soul.

Elf. So soon to fall into this musing mood—
I thought, my lord, you promis'd you would leave
These looks behind at Court. Nay, 'twas the cause
Assign'd for this my residence at Harewood,
That you might never come to these fond arms,
But with a breast devoid of public care,
And fill'd alone with rapture and Elfrida.
Said you not so? Why then that pensive posture,
That down-cast eye? Surely the city's din
And this calm grove have lost their difference.
I'll with you to the palace.

Athel. Heaven forbid!

Elf. Nay, my best lord, I meant it but in sport;
For should you bid me quit these blooming lawns
For some bare heath, or drear unpeopled desert;
Believe me, I would think its wildness Eden,
If Athelwold, with frequent visitation,
Endear'd the savage scene; but yet I fear
My father.

Athel. Hah! why him?

Elf. You know his temper;
How jealous of his rank, and his trac'd lineage
From royal ancestry. I fear me much,
He will not brook you should conceal me long
In this lone privacy: 'no, he will deem it
'Far unbecoming her, whose veins are fill'd

'With the rich stream of his nobility.
'Should it be so, his hot and fiery nature,
'I doubt, will blaze, and do some dreadful outrage.'

Athel. He need not know it, or, if chance he should,
It matters not, if so this forest life
Seem of your own adoption and free choice.
And that it will so seem, I trust that love,
Which ever yet has met my wayward will
With pleas'd compliance, and unask'd assent.

Elf. And ever shall: yet blame me not, my lord,
If prying womanhood should prompt a wish
To learn the cause of this your strange commotion,
Which ever wakes, if I but drop one thought
Of quitting Harewood.

Athel. Go to the clear surface
Of yon unruffled lake, and, bending o'er it,
There read my answer.

Elf. These are riddles, Sir———

Athel. No; for its glassy and reflecting surface
Will smile with charms too tempting for a palace.

Elf. Does Athelwold distrust Elfrida's faith?

Athel. No; but he much distrusts Elfrida's beauty.

Elf. Away: you trifle.

Athel. Never more in earnest:
I would not for the throne which Edgar sits on,
That Edgar should behold it.

Elf. What, my lord,
Think you the face, that caught your single heart,
Will make all hearts its captives? Vain surmize.
Yet grant it could; Elfrida's your's alone:
Not Edgar's self would dare to seize it from you.
Edgar's a king, and not a tyrant.

Athel. True,

Edgar's a king, a just one; his firm feet
Walk ever in the fore-right road of honour:
Nor do I know what lure can draw his steps
Devious from that straight path, save only one:
That tempting lure is beauty. Ah! Elfrida,
Throw but the dazzling bait within his view,
The untam'd wolf does not with fiercer rage
Burst the slight bondage of the silken net,
Than he the ties of law. 'Late, very late,
'Smit casually with young Matilda's face,
'He straight commanded her reluctant mother
'To yield her to his arms: nor had she 'scap'd
'The violating fervour of his love,
'Had not the prudent dame suborn'd her handmaid
'To take the unchaste office, and be led,
'Veil'd in the mask of night, to Edgar's chamber,
'A counterfeit Matilda. As it chanc'd,
'The damsel pleas'd the king, nor did detection
'A whit abate his fondness; he forgave
'The prudent mother, eas'd Matilda's fears,
'And led the wanton minstrel to his court,
'Where still she shares——'

Enter ALBINA.

Albina. Behold, Earl Athelwold,
A messenger arrives; his speed and aspect
Speak some important errand.

Enter EDWIN.

Athel. How now, Edwin?

Edwin. The king, my lord, is on his way to Harewood.

Athel. The king!

Edwin. His purpose is to pass through Mercia:

And in a hasty message, some two hours
After you left the palace, this his pleasure
Was sent you by Lord Seofrid; withal
Commanding your attendance. You being absent,
He straightway turn'd his course thro' this fair forest,
Meaning to chace the stag; his train is small,
As was his purpose sudden.

Elf. Good, my lord,
Why thus perplex'd?

Albina. Heav'ns! what a deep despair
Sits on his brow!

Elf. The notice sure is short;
But that's a trifle; a small train requires
The smaller preparation: let him come.

Athel. Yes, let him come: so thou wilt say, Elfrida,
When thou hast heard my tale. Yes, let him come:—
So wilt thou say, and let thy husband perish.
Yet shall these arms once more embrace thee closely,
Ere yet thou fly them as the pois'nous adder.
'Tis o'er; in that embrace Elfrida's love
Was buried; and in that embrace, the peace
Of wretched Athelwold.

'*Elf.* What may this be!

'*Athel.* Oh Edwin, Edwin! when surviving Malice
'Shall prey upon the fame of thy dead master,
'Wilt thou not some way strive to check the Fiend's
'Insatiate fury? Wilt thou see my name
'Defil'd and blacken'd with Detraction's venom,
'And bear it patiently?'

Elf. What means my best——

Athel. Peace; not a word of best, or lov'd, or dear:
These are not titles now for thee to use,
Or me to triumph in. Virgins, retire:

We would a while be private. Nay, return.
Concealment would be vain; and ye and Edwin
Are bound to me. 'Albina! as for you,
'I sav'd your father when his blood was forfeit.'

Albina. Not I, great Earl, alone, but all this train
Are bound by ev'ry tie of faith and love
To gen'rous Athelwold; to that mild master,
Who never forc'd our service to one act,
But of such liberal sort, as Freedom's self
Would smilingly perform.

Athel. It may be so.
But where's the tie, Elfrida, that may bind
Thy faith and love?

Elf. The strongest sure, my lord,
The golden, nuptial tie. Try but its strength.

Athel. I must perforce this instant. Know, Elfrida,
Once, on a day of high festivity,
The youthful king, encircled with his nobles,
Crown'd high the sparkling bowl; and much of love,
Of beauty much the sprightly converse ran;
When, as it well might chance, the gay Lord Ardulph
Made gallant note of Orgar's peerless daughter,
And in such phrase as might enflame a breast
More cool than Edgar's. Early on the morrow
Th' impatient Monarch gave me swift commission
To view those charms, of which Lord Ardulph's tongue
Had given such warm description: to whose words
If my impartial eye gave full assent,
I had his royal mandate on the instant
To hail you Queen of England.

Elf. 'Stead of which
You came, and hail'd me wife of Athelwold.
Was this the tale I was so taught to fear?

Was this the deed, that, known, would make me fly
Thy clasping arm, as 'twere the pois'nous adder?
No, let this tender, fond embrace assure thee,
That thy Elfrida's love can never die;
'Or, if it could, this animating touch
'Would soon rewake it into life and rapture.'

Athel. Dost thou then pardon me? Come, injur'd sov'reign,
Plunge deep thy sword of justice in this breast,
And I will die contented.

Elf. Heav'n forbid!
What can be done?

Albina. Indeed, ye constant pair,
'Tis fit ye strive to fly the coming danger.
For safety now sits wav'ring on your love,
Like the light down upon the thistle's beard,
Which ev'ry breeze may part. Say, noble Earl,
What feint was us'd to lull the king's impatience?

Athel. Soon as these shades had veil'd my beauteous bride,
I hasted back to Edgar, laugh'd at Ardulph,
And talk'd of Elfrid, as of vulgar beauties;
'Own'd no uncommon light'ning in her eye,
'No breast that sham'd the snow, or cheek the rose.'
The sprightly king believ'd me, and forgot her.

Albina. But an alliance, great as Athelwold's
With Orgar's daughter, soon would blaze abroad,
The theme of popular converse.

Athel. True, it would;
And for that reason, when I last was here,
The king was taught I went to wed Elfrida.

Elf. How so, my lord?

Athel. Thy father, my Elfrida,

Has rich possessions: these, and these alone,
I made my theme of love; and told the king,
That tho' thy face (pardon the impious falsehood)
Boasted not charms to grace a Monarch's throne,
Yet would thy dower well suit his minister.
I therefore meant to ask thee of thy father,
And, (that my want of skill in choice might 'scape
All censure) hide thee close in Harewood castle.
Edgar with smiles consented, and, I think,
Harbours no thought of my disloyalty.

Elf. If so, what danger now?

Athel. Ask'st thou, what danger?
'Sdeath, will that glance not instantly proclaim
My tenfold treachery?

Elf. He shall not see me.
I'll hide me instant in some secret chamber,
And robe this virgin in my bridal vestments.

Athel. Thy love, like balm, runs trick'ling o'er the wounds
Of my torn bosom; yet 'tis vain, 'tis vain:
Thou must thyself appear, for Ardulph ever
Attends the king, and would detect the fraud.

Elf. If so, yet still I can insure our safety;
For as you fear my softness of complexion,
I'll stain it with the juice of dusky leaves,
Or yellow berries, which this various wood
From tree or shrub will yield me. These I'll use,
And form a thousand methods to conceal
The little gleams of grace, which nature lent me.
Fear not my caution.

Athel. Gentlest, best of creatures,
Go, do then as thy tender care directs.
And yet how vain? What wondrous art can steal

The liquid lightnings from those radiant eyes,
Or rob the wavy ringlets of that hair
Of all their nameless graces? Say it could,
Yet would that modest, but majestic mien,
That inborn dignity of soul, which breathes
Through each angelic gesture, still remain
To seize the heart of Edgar. Rest, Elfrida,
Rest as thou art, in all that blaze of beauty:
I must submit to my just lot, and lose thee.

'*Elf.* Away, my lord, with these too anxious scruples:
'Fear not my carriage; I will stoop my head,
'Drawl out an idiot phrase, and do each act
'With ev'n a rude and peasant aukwardness.'

Edwin. Ere this, my lord, I think the king has reach'd
The full mid-way; 'twere fit you stood prepar'd
To give him meeting.

Athel. Give him meeting, Edwin!
Alas! I have no mask to veil my baseness.
When deep contrition shadows all my soul,
I cannot dress my features in light smiles,
And look the thing I am not. No, these eyes
Are not as yet true vassals to my purpose,
As yet indeed I am but half a villain.

Elf. You weigh this matter in too nice a balance.
Your crime, my lord, is but the crime of love:
Thousands like you have fail'd.

Athel. I know, Elfrida,
Could love absolve the crime, my soul were pure
As maiden-innocence. Yes, I do love thee,
And thou art fair—beyond—But that's my bane;
Thy ev'ry charm adds weight to my offence,
And heaps fresh wrongs upon the best of masters:
Yes, Elfrid, Edgar was the best of masters.

Oh hide me from the thought in that dear bosom—
Heav'ns! I must die or keep her.

Elf. Live, or die,
I'm thine alike. Death cannot aught abate,
Or life augment, my love. Let this embrace
Be witness of my truth.

Athel. It shall, it shall:
Thy ev'ry word and look declares thee faithful.
Secure of all thy love, and all thy prudence,
Returning confidence has arm'd my soul
For this dread meeting: resting on thy truth
I go—— [*Exit* Athelwold.

ELFRIDA *and* EDWIN.

Elf. Go, and thy guardian saint preserve thee,
Show'r blessings vast as would my lavish love,
Had I his power to bless thee.

'*Albina.* Yes, my sisters,
'The silent awe that reigns through all your train,
'Befits ye well. Let admiration first
'Pay her mute tribute. She can best express,
'By those her kindling cheeks, and lifted eyes,
'Where the tear twinkles, that transcendent praise
'Elfrida's virtue claims.

'*Elf.* My virtue, Virgins,
'Is only love. Or, say that it be virtue,
'It owes its source to love, to chastest love,
'Than which what passion more impels the mind
'To fair and gen'rous action?' But the hours
Are precious now. I'll to yon neighb'ring grove:
There grows an azure flow'r, I oft have mark'd it,
Which stains the pressing finger with a juice
Of dusky, yellow tinct: its name I know not.
I'll fetch and try it straight. Wait my return. [*Exit* Elfrida.

ODE.—Recitative.

Albina.

" Whence does this sudden lustre rise,
" That gilds the grove? Not like the noontide beam,
" Which sparkling dances on the trembling stream,
" Nor the blue lightning's flash swift-shooting thro' the skies.
" But such a solemn steady light,
" As o'er the cloudless azure steals,
" When Cynthia, riding on the brow of night,
" Stops in the mid career her silver wheels."

Chorus.

" Whence can it rise, but from the sober power
" Of Constancy? She, heav'n-born queen,
" Descends, and here in Harewood's hallow'd bow'r
" Fixes her stedfast reign:
" Stedfast, as when her high command
Gives to the starry band
" Their radiant stations in heav'n's ample plain.
" Stedfast, as when around this nether sphere,
" She winds the purple year:"

Duet.

" Tells what time the snow-drop cold
" Its maiden whiteness may unfold,
" When the golden harvest bend,
" When the ruddy fruits descend."

Chorus.

" Then bids pale Winter wake, to pour
" The pearly hail's translucent show'r,

" To cast his silv'ry mantle o'er the woods,
" And bind in crystal chains the slumb'ring floods.

' The soul, which she inspires, has pow'r to climb
' To all the heights sublime
' Of Virtue's tow'ring hill;
' That hill, at whose low foot weak-warbling strays
' The scanty stream of human praise,
' A shallow trickling rill.
' While on the summits hov'ring angels shed,
' From their blest pinions, the nectareous dews
' Of rich immortal Fame: from these the Muse
' Oft steals some precious drops, and skilful blends
' With those the lower fountain lends;
' Then show'rs it all on some high-favour'd head.
' But thou, Elfrida, claims't the genuine dew;
' Thy worth demands it all.
' Pure, and unmixt, on thee the holy drops shall fall.'

ACT III. SCENE I.

Continues. *Enter* ELFRIDA, ORGAR, ALBINA, *and attendant* Ladies.

Elfrida [*Looking on the flower.*]

'Tis strange, my Virgins, this sweet child of Summer,
Silken and soft, whose breath perfumes the air,
Whose gay vest paints the morn, should in its bosom
Hide such pollution? Yet 'tis often thus:
All are not as they seem.

Orgar. Yet hear me, lady.

Elf. Be gone, unmanner'd stranger, nor pursue me;

Hence, from the grove. Know ye this Pilgrim, Virgins?
On my return I met him here.
Albina. Alas!
We saw him here before, and heard his tale,
That mov'd our pity—But I fear me now,
'Twas false; some spy perchance, and may have heard—
Orgar. I have; yet not for that are you betray'd.
Fair Excellence, my heart is bound unto you,
I feel a tender interest in your welfare,
Tender as fathers feel.
Elf. As fathers feel!
That well-known voice, and ah! that look——
Orgar. Elfrida!
Elf. Yes, it is he, it is my Father, Virgins.
Support me, or I faint! Oh wherefore, Sir?——
Orgar. Take courage, daughter; my parental fondness
Prompted this visit. Thus I came disguis'd,
To learn the cause of my dear child's confinement:
'And I have learnt it.
'*Elf.* Then all's lost for ever.
'*Orgar.* Thou know'st, Elfrida, next my house's honour,
'Thy peace has ever been my dearest care.'
But such an insult!—No: I cannot brook it.
So black a fraud! By all my ancestors,
By Belin's shade I will have ample vengeance.
Elf. Alas, I know too well your dreadful purpose.
I knew it at the first. Yes, he must fall.
Yet pardon me, if my poor trembling heart
Puts up I know not what of pray'rs and vows
To ev'ry pitying saint. Celestial guardians
Of nuptial constancy! Oh bend from heav'n
Your star-crown'd heads, and hear a wretched woman,

That begs ye save, from a dread father's rage,
Her lord, her husband.

Orgar. Husband! 'Sdeath, what husband?
Is Athelwold thy husband? 'Sooner call
'Th' impeached thief true master of the booty
'He stole, or murder'd for.' Disdain the villain;
And help me to revenge thee.

Albina. Think, great Earl;
What sanctimonious ties restrain your daughter.
Did she not swear before the hallow'd shrine
Eternal fealty to this her lord?
Yet say, that he deceiv'd her; shall her truth
Dare to revenge? No, Sir, in highest heav'n
Vengeance 'mid storms and tempests sits enshrin'd,
Vested in robes of light'ning, and there sleeps,
Unwak'd but by th' incens'd Almighty's call.
Oh! let not man presume to take unbid
That dread vicegerency.

Orgar. Peace, Virgins, peace.
Not ev'n the saws of Druids or of Bards
Have weight with me, when insults high as this
Rouse my just indignation. Hear me, daughter,
You went to search for flow'rs, to blot your charms
With their dun hue. Yes, thou shalt search for flow'rs,
Yet shall they be the loveliest of the spring;
Flow'rs, that entangling in thine auburn hair,
Or blushing 'mid the whiteness of thy bosom,
May, to the power of ev'ry native grace,
Give double life and lustre. 'Haste, my child,
'Array thyself in thy most gorgeous garb,
'And see each jewel, which my love procur'd thee,
'Dart its full radiance.' More than all, put on

The nobler ornament of winning smiles,
And kind inviting glances.
Elf. Never, never;
When this true heart renounces Athelwold,
May equitable heav'n—
Orgar. Away with vows;
And 'with a duteous, and attentive ear,'
Listen to my persuasions. 'Much I wish
'Persuasions might prevail,' that not compell'd
To use a father's just prerogative,
My will may meet with thy unforc'd obedience.
Follow me, on thy duty.
Elf. Cruel father,
That duty shall obey you; I will follow:
Yet dread as is that frown, dreadful as death,
It shall not shake the tenor of my faith;
Living or dead I still am Athelwold's.

[*Exeunt* Orgar *and* Elfrida.

'*Albina.* Horror! horror!
'The pen of Fate, dipt in its deepest gall,
'Perhaps on that ill-omen'd wall
'Now writes th' event of this tremendous day.
'Oh! that our weaker sight
'Could read the mystic characters, and spy
'What to the unpurg'd mortal eye
'Is hid in endless night.'

RECITATIVE.

"Suspense! thou frozen guest, be gone.
"The wretch, whose rugged bed
"Is spread on thorns, more softly rests his head,
"Than he that sinks amid the cygnet's down."

CHORUS.

" If thou, tormenting fiend, be nigh,
" To prompt his starting tear, his ceaseless sigh,
" His wish, his pray'r, his vow for ling'ring certainty."

[*Horn sounds.*

Albina. But hark! that certainty arrives. Methought
I heard the winding horn. ' I did not err;' [*Horn again.*
The King is near at hand. ' This quick approach
' Will sure prevent this proud Earl's cruel purpose.
' Yet what of that? Does her fair form require
' The blazon of rich vesture? Genuine beauty
' Nor asks, nor needs it: negligence alone
' Is its bright diadem, and artless ease
' Its robe of Tyrian tincture.' Say, my sisters,
Shall we salute this monarch with a hymn
Of festival and joy! Alas, such joy
Ill suits our trembling hearts, and weeping eyes.
And now 'twere vain: for see, the King approaches.

Enter EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, *and* Lords.

Edgar. No, Athelwold; not from a partial blindness,
Or for the mode and guise of courtesy,
Are we thus large in praise; in our true judgment,
This castle is not more kind Nature's debtor
For its delicious site, than 'tis to thee
For this so goodly structure. From its base,
Ev'n to yon turrets trim, and taper spires,
All is of choicest Masonry. Each part
Doth boast a separate grace; but ornament,
Tho' here the richest that the eye can note,
Is us'd, not lavish'd; art seems generous here,
Yet not a prodigal. But ah! my Earl, [*Seeing the* Chorus.

What living charms are here? Thy castle's beauty
Must not detain me from this lovelier prospect.
Your pardon, fair ones, that my wayward eye
Paid not at first, where first was surely due,
Its homage to your graces.

Athel. Heavens! they weep.
What may this mean? Some dread and unseen chance
Has counter-work'd my safety.

Edgar. Whence this silence;
Why are your lovely heads thus bow'd with sadness?
Beshrew my heart, my lord, but this is strange.
I know thee, Earl, and know thy gentleness,
More prone t' obey, than lord it o'er the sex;
Else should I guess this sorrow had its rise
From some discourteous treatment.

Albina. No, dread Sov'reign;
He is the noblest, gentlest, best of masters;
And may your love reward——

Enter ORGAR.

Athel. Death to my hopes!

Orgar. Yes, villain, start; but let this vengeful arm
Arrest thy baseness; would to heav'n its strength,
Thus grasping thee, could open thy false breast,
And bear thy heart to the sham'd eye of day.

Edgar. Patience, hot man. What art thou?

Orgar. Earl of Devon!
Pardon me, Prince; that this my honest rage
O'erleaps obedient duty. I am wrong'd,
Yet that's but small; for know, much injur'd Prince,
Thy wrongs as well as mine both call for justice.
Yes, sir, I here, on a true subject's oath,
Proclaim Earl Athelwold a faithless traitor.

Edgar. Ha! what is this? Renounce the word, old Earl;
Thy length of years hath forc'd thee, sure, to press
The verge of dotage. Athelwold! What Athelwold
A faithless traitor! Perish the suspicion.
Never before did word, or thought, or look,
Give doubt of his distinguish'd loyalty.
Dotage alone could frame the accusation.

Orgar. I do not dote, thank Heav'n, my faculties
Are yet my own, unblemish'd and unhurt.
Would so my daughter were!

Edgar. What is his drift?

Athel. Better, my royal Lord, you mark'd him not;
The wayward Earl is——

Orgar. What, audacious villain!
I will be heard.

Edgar. Go to, thou choleric Lord.

Orgar. When thou hast heard me, Edgar, call me choleric.

Edgar. Speak then, and briefly.

Orgar. Once, my sacred liege,
I had a daughter, duteous as e'er crown'd
A father's wish, and lovely as could warm
A youth to am'rous transports. This, my Lord,
You learnt long since from noble Ardulph's praises,
And fir'd with his description, sent this Earl,
This faithful Earl, t' invite her to your throne.

Edgar. No, Orgar, not t' invite her to your throne,
Simply to note her beauty was his errand.

Orgar. Yes, he did note it, stampt it for his own.
But why this parley? Enter, Sir, these gates,
And let Elfrida's features be the book,
Where you may read the story of his falsehood,
Ev'n on the instant.

Edgar. Noble Lord, lead on. [*To* Athelwold.

We'll follow to the trial. I will humour
The Earl's hot temper. He has heard, my friend,
We meant t' exalt his daughter, and for that
His partial fondness, link'd with his ambition,
Levels this rage at thee. Attend us, Lords.
[*Exeunt* Edgar, Orgar, &c.

Albina. My Lord, the King is enter'd: stand not thus
In mute 'and fixt' distress.

Athel. Away, away;
How can a man that thinks such thoughts as I do,
Have pow'r of word or motion? Speak to me;
Inform me all. What said she, when I left her?
How came her father hither? How did she
Greet his arrival? Say, was she compell'd,
Or did her free, and voluntary voice,
Tell all the story? Did she marshal him
To this his deed of vengeance?

Albina. Dearest Master;
Elfrida told him not: his own deceit
Was his informer. Here the Earl arriv'd
At break of day, in mean and pilgrim weeds,
All like an ancient, toil-worn traveller;
And with a tale told in such piteous strain,
Fraught with such sad and moving circumstance,
With woes so well dissembl'd; that our softness
Suffer'd him enter yon close bow'r for rest,
Where he, as was no doubt his settl'd purpose,
O'erheard the secret. This our disobedience,
We own——

Athel. Was my perdition. Yet 'tis well;
I blame ye not; it was Heav'n's justice, Virgins;
This brought him hither; this annull'd your faith.
I do not think, you purpos'd my destruction;

Edgar. Ha! what is this? Renounce the word, old Earl;
Thy length of years hath forc'd thee, sure, to press
The verge of dotage. Athelwold! What Athelwold
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At break of day, in mean and pilgrim weeds,
All like an ancient, toil-worn traveller;
And with a tale told in such piteous strain,
Fraught with such sad and moving circumstance,
With woes so well dissembl'd; that our softness
Suffer'd him enter yon close bow'r for rest,
Where he, as was no doubt his settl'd purpose,
O'erheard the secret. This our disobedience,
We own——

Athel. Was my perdition. Yet 'tis well;
I blame ye not; it was Heav'n's justice, Virgins;
This brought him hither; this annull'd your faith.
I do not think, you purpos'd my destruction;

But yet you have destroy'd me. O Elfrida,
And art thou faithful? This my jealous eye
Thought it had mark'd some speck of change upon thee;
Thought it had found, what might have made thy loss
Somewhat within endurance. 'Tis not so;
And this thy purity but serves t' augment
The sum of my distractions. Meet me, Edgar,
With thy rais'd sword: be merciful and sudden——

[*Exit* Athelwold.

ODE.

Albina.

Say, will no white-rob'd Son of Light,
Swift-darting from his heav'nly height,
Here deign to take his hallow'd stand;
Here wave his amber locks; unfold
His pinions cloth'd with downy gold;
Here smiling stretch his tutelary wand?

Recitative.

"And you, ye host of saints, for ye have known
"Each dreary path in life's perplexing maze,
"Tho' now ye circle yon eternal throne
"With harpings high of inexpressive praise,
"Will not your train descend in radiant state,
"To break with Mercy's beam this gath'ring cloud of Fate?"

Duet *and* Chorus.

"'Tis silence all. No Son of Light
"Darts swiftly from his heav'nly height;
"No train of radiant Saints descend.
"Mortals, in vain ye hope to find,
"If guilt, if fraud has stain'd your mind,
"Or saint to hear, or angel to defend."

'So Truth proclaims. I hear the sacred sound
'Burst from the centre of her burning throne:
'Where aye she sits with star-wreath'd lustre crown'd:
'A bright sun clasps her adamantine zone.
'So Truth proclaims: her awful voice I hear:
'With many a solemn pause it slowly meets my ear.

'Attend, ye sons of men; attend, and say,
'Does not enough of my refulgent ray
'Break through the veil of your mortality!
'Say, does not reason in this form descry
'Unnumber'd, nameless glories, that surpass
'The Angel's floating pomp, the Seraph's glowing grace?

'Shall then your earth-born daughters vie
'With me? Shall she, whose brightest eye
'But emulates the diamond's blaze,
'Whose cheek but mocks the peach's bloom,
'Whose breath the hyacinth's perfume,
'Whose melting voice the warbling woodlark's lays,
'Shall she be deem'd my rival? Shall a form
'Of elemental dross, of mould'ring clay,
'Vie with these charms imperial? The poor worm
'Shall prove her contest vain. Life's little day
'Shall pass, and she is gone: while I appear
'Flush'd with the bloom of youth thro' Heav'n's eternal year.

'Know, mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
'Ere first these orbs in Ether hung,
'I shone amid the heav'nly throng.
'These eyes beheld Creation's day,
'This voice began the choral lay,
'And taught Archangels their triumphant song.

'Pleas'd I survey'd bright Nature's gradual birth,
'Saw infant Light with kindling lustre spread,
'Soft vernal fragrance clothe the flow'ring earth,
'And Ocean heave on his extended bed;
'Saw the tall pine aspiring pierce the sky,
'The tawny lion stalk, the rapid eagle fly.
'Last, Man arose, erect in youthful grace,
'Heav'n's hallow'd image stampt upon his face,
'And as he rose, the high behest was giv'n,
'That I alone, of all the host of heav'n,
'Should reign Protectress of the godlike youth.'
'Thus the Almighty spake: he spake and call'd me Truth.'

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Continues. *Enter* ATHELWOLD, EDWIN, *and* ALBINA.

Athelwold.

BANISH me! No. I'll die. For why should life
Remain a lonely lodger in that breast,
Which Honour leaves deserted? Idle breath!
Thou can'st not fill such vacancy. Be gone!
This sword shall free——

Albina. Oh shame to fortitude!
Shame to that manly passion, which inspires
Its vigorous warmth, when the bleak blasts of Fate
Would chill the soul! Oh call the ready Virtue
Quick to thy aid, for she is ever near thee;
Is ever prompt to spread her sevenfold shield
O'er noble breasts!

Athel. And but o'er noble breasts;
Not o'er the breast, which livid Infamy

Indelibly has spotted. Oh shame, shame!
Sword, rid me of the thought.
Albina. Forbear, forbear;
Think what a sea of deep perdition whelms
The wretch's trembling soul, who launches forth
Unlicens'd to eternity. Think, think;
And let the thought restrain thy impious hand.
The race of man is one vast marshall'd army,
Summon'd to pass the spacious realms of Time,
Their leader the Almighty. 'In that march
'Ah who may quit his post? when' high in air
The chos'n Archangel rides, whose right hand wields
Th' imperial standard of Heav'n's providence,
Which, dreadly sweeping through the vaulted sky,
O'ershadows all creation.
Athel. I was once——
Yes, I was once (I have his royal word for't)
A man of such try'd faith, such steady honour,
As mock'd all doubt and scruple.—What a change!
Now must that unstain'd, virgin character,
Be doom'd to gross and hourly prostitution,
Sating the lust of Slander; and my wife,
My chaste Elfrida! O distraction! no,
I'll fly to save her.
Edwin. Stay, my dearest master;
You rush on instant death.
Athel. I mean it, slave,
And would'st thou hinder me?
Edwin. Yes, Sir, I hold
'Tis duty to my King, and love to you,
Thus to oppose your entrance.
Athel. What, thou traitor!——
Thy pardon, Edwin, I forgot myself;

Forgot, that I stood here a banish'd man;
And that this gate was shut against its master.
And yet this gate leads to my dear Elfrida;
Can it be barr'd to me? Oh earth, cold earth,
Upon whose breast I cast this load of mis'ry,
Bear it a while! and you, ye aged oaks,
Ye venerable fathers of this wood,
Who oft have cool'd beneath your arching shades
My humble ancestors, oft seen them hie
To your spread umbrage, from yon sultry field,
Their scene of honest labour, shade, ah! shade
The last, the wretchedest of all their race!
I will not long pollute ye; for I mean
To pay beneath your consecrated gloom
A sacrifice to honour, and the ghosts
Of those progenitors, who sternly frown
On me, their base descendant.

Edwin. See, Albina,
How horror shades his brow; how fixt his eye;
Heav'ns! what despair——

Albina. Edwin, 'tis ever thus
With noble minds, if chance they slide to folly;
Remorse stings deeper, and relentless Conscience
Pours more of gall into the bitter cup
Of their severe repentance.

Athel. 'Tis resolv'd:
I'll enter and demand a second audience.
And yet how vain! Ere I can reach his ear,
His ready train will stop me, and, with all
The cruel punctuality of office,
So prompt to act 'gainst fallen favourites,
Dismiss me with reproof.—Surely I heard her.

Elf. [*Speaks within.*] No, I will once more clasp him in my arms.

Athel. Was't not Elfrida's voice? 'Tis she herself.

Enter ELFRIDA, EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, *and* Attendants.

Elf. I will not be withheld. I will o'ertake him,
Will go with him to exile. Hah, my husband!
So quickly found! They thought to tear me from thee;
But we will part no more.

Edgar. Take heed, Elfrida,
This ill-tim'd fondness may recal the fate
I just now freed him from; who loves like me
Can ill brook this. Or quit him, or he dies.

Athel. Yes, let me die! Death is my dearest wish.
Quit me, Elfrida! leave me to my fate.
'Tis just, 'tis just. Thus to my Sov'reign's sword
Freely I bare my breast. Strike, injur'd Prince;
But do not banish me.

Elf. What, Athelwold,
Is then the life, on whose dear preservation
Elfrida's peace depends, not worth the saving?
Die then. But ere thy murd'rer strikes the stroke,
Let me inform him, that his act destroys
No single life.

Edgar. By heav'n, she loves the traitor
Beyond all hope of change——

Elf. No, Athelwold,
Thou shalt not die. That pause in royal Edgar
Bespeaks forgiveness. 'He will soon relent;
'And mercy, flowing from his gracious tongue,
'Seal thy full pardon. Let us kneel, my Lord;
'Seize the important moment; kneel together;
'And as these streaming eyes and lifted hands
'Employ each act of silent supplication,

'Do thou recount—Ah! no, thy modest tongue
'Could never tell ev'n half the gallant story.
'Be silent then. Let Edgar's self reflect;
'For well I know his mem'ry writes thy virtues
'Upon its fairest page.' Yes, let him weigh
All thy past deeds of loyalty and faith
'Gainst this so light a fault.

Edgar. So light a fault!
Had he dislodg'd my richest coffer'd treasures,
'Dispers'd sedition's poison 'mid my troops,'
Or aim'd with daring and rebellious hand
To snatch these regal honours from my brow,
I sooner could have pardon'd.

Athel. Cease, Elfrida.
My doom is just—Yes, royal Sir, I go
To banishment. I do deserve to breathe,
Deserve to bear this load of life about me,
For many years; to lengthen out my age,
List'ning the hourly knell of curst remembrance,
Whose leaden stroke shall tell to my sad soul
That I was faithful once.

Elf. Oh flinty Edgar!
What! will this penitence not move thee? Know
There is a rose-lip'd Seraph sits on high,
Who ever bends his holy ear to earth
To mark the voice of Penitence, to catch
Her solemn sighs, to tune them to his harp,
And echo them in harmonies divine
Up to the throne of Grace. Ev'n Heav'n is won
By Penitence, and shall Heav'n's substitute,
Shall Edgar scorn—

Edgar. Cease, cease, thou beauteous pleader!
Ah far too beauteous! Would'st thou gain thy suit,

Why glows that vermil lip? why rolls that eye
Bright as the ray of Morn? Why in each gesture
Such inexpressive graces, but because
They're native all, and will not be conceal'd?
'Else sure each charm betrays him, and becomes
'An advocate, whose silent eloquence
'Pleads 'gainst thy voice, and foils its tuneful power.'
Traitor! was this the face which thy false tongue
Profan'd as vulgar? This such common beauty
As the fair eye of day beheld each hour
In ev'ry clime he lighted? Base dissembler,
This instant quit our realm.

Elf. Oh stay thee, Edgar,
And once more hear me! At thy feet I fall,
As earnest and distrest a supplicant
As e'er embrac'd the knees of Majesty.
Oh! spare thy Country's guardian, Edgar! spare
Thy closest, surest friend! Let not one fault
Cancel his thousand, thousand acts of faith.
Alas! I fall to vainest repetition.
Grief, whelming grief drowns all my faculties,
And leaves me nought but tears.

Edgar. Rise, rise, Elfrida.

Elf. Shall he then live?

Edgar. He shall, he shall, my fair.
If so he quit the realm within the space
Our sentence limited.

Elf. Oh stop not there!
That sentence will be death to Athelwold.
Think, for thou know'st full well his gentle nature,
Can he support the rigour of this doom?
Can he, who liv'd but in thy gracious smiles,
Who'd pine, if chance those smiles, a single hour,

Were dealt him thriftily; think, can he bear
The infamy of exile?

Edgar. Hear me, Athelwold.
Did I not show'r on thy much-favour'd head
My thickest honours, and with gift so ready,
As out-run all request? Did I not hold thee
Still in such open confidence of friendship,
Such love as——

Athel. Sooner stab me than repeat it.

Edgar. Yet give me hearing. I repeat not this
To taunt or gall thee. On my soul thy worth
Did o'ertop all those honours, and thy zeal
Kept pace with my best love. Nor, till this deed—
But such a deed! look there, look on that face,
Thou know'st me, Athelwold, hast seen me gaze
On a soft-yielding fair one, till mine eye
Shot flames. Perdition seize me, if this heart
Knew love till now.

Athel. I see it plainly, 'my Liege,'
Nor say I ought to lessen my offence.
No, here I kneel—Oh! cast but on my mis'ry
One kind forgiving glance, this ready sword
Shall expiate all.

Elf. Ah! will you? must he die?

Edgar. No, stay thee, Athelwold, and sheath thy sword;
I never yet (save but this hour of rage)
Deem'd thee my subject; thou wert still my friend;
And injur'd as I am, thou still art such:
I do forego the word; to banish thee
Or seal thy death, transcends a friend's just right.

Elf. Ah gen'rous deed! ah godlike goodness! Virgins,
The King will pardon him. Wake each high note
Of praise and gratitude, teach Edgar's name

To Harewood's furthest Echo. Oh my Sov'reign!
What words can speak my thanks——
Edgar. Nay, check these transports,
Lest, if I see thee thus, my soul forget
Its milder purpose. I will leave thee, Lady;
Yet first my lips must press this gentle hand,
And breathe one soft sigh of no common fervour.
Now on, my Lords—Fair wonder of thy sex,
Adieu. We'll straight unto our realm of Mercia.
Yet first, as was our purpose, through this forest
We'll chace the nimble roebuck; may the sport
More please us than we hope. Earl Athelwold,
Thou too must join our train. Follow us straight.
[*Exit* Edgar, *&c.*
Athel. I do, my Liege. Elfrida, I have much
For thy lov'd ear, and have but one farewel
To tell it all—And yet—
Elf. Ah! loiter not,
It may enrage. Farewel. Be sure, take heed
I come not in your talk; 'avoid ev'n thinking;
'Check ev'n the sighs of absence.' Haste, my Earl,
Oh haste thee, as thou lov'st thy constant wife.
[*Exit* Athelwold

Enter ORGAR.

Orgar. Thy constant wife! ah, stain of all thy race,
Degen'rate girl! 'Henceforth be Orgar deem'd
'Of soft, and dove-like temper, who could see
'A child of his stoop to such vile abasement,
'And yet forebore just wrath; forebore to draw
'That blood she had defil'd from her mean veins.
'But sure thou art not mine! some Elf or Fay
'Did spirit away my babe, and by curst charms

'Thee in her cradle plac'd.' Nay, hang not on me.
Dry, dry thy tears, they've done their office amply.
Edgar has pardon'd him. No, by my Earldom,
I cannot think of Majesty thus meanly.
He'll yet avenge it: What if chance he should not?
That stops not me; I have a heart, an arm,
A sword can do me justice.
Elf. Ah! my Lord,
Are you still merciless? Alas, I hop'd—
Orgar. What could'st thou hope, Elfrida? 'Could'st thou think
'I e'er would pardon his vile perfidy,
'Or thy ignoble softness?
'*Elf.* Dearest father,
'Frown not thus sternly on me. I would fain
'Touch your relenting soul, fain win your heart
'To fatherly forgiveness. For through life
'I've oft had pleasing proof how that forgiveness
'Stoop'd to my fond persuasion. But I fear
'Persuasion now has left me. My sad thoughts
'Are all on wing, all following Athelwold,
'Like unseen ministring spirits:——Pardon, Sir,
'That frown shall check me, I'll not mention him;
'I will but plead for my own weakness, plead
'For that soft sympathy of soul, which you
'Deem base and servile. Base perhaps it might be,
'Were I of bolder sex. But I, alas!——
'Ah! pardon me, if Nature stampt me Woman;
'Gave me a heart soft, gentle, prone to pity,
'And very fearful. Fearful, sure with cause
'At this dread hour, when, if one hapless word,
'One sigh break forth unbid, it may rekindle
'The Monarch's rage—What has my phrensy said?

'I've wander'd from my meaning. Dearest Virgins,
'My rash tongue more inflames him. Oh! assist me,
'Ye are not thus opprest with inward horror:
'Kneel, plead, persuade, convince——
'*Albina.* Alas, my mistress!
'What may a servant's accents do t' appease
'This furious Earl?
'*Orgar.* Ye well may spare them: Maidens,'
Know my firm soul's resolv'd, and be my heart
As base as Athelwold's, if it foregoes
The honest resolution. 'Think what I,
'What Britain suffers from this traitor's fraud:
'Had Edgar took my daughter to his bed,
'Our British line, which now is doom'd to sink
'In vile subjection, had again assum'd
'The pall of royalty, with half its power,
'In time perchance the whole. But this false Saxon
'Shall with his life repay me.' Here I'll wait
His first return, and in his own domain
Give him fair combat. 'I have known the time
'When this good arm had hardihood enough
'For thrice his prowess. What is lost through age
'My just cause shall supply;' and he shall fall
As did the traitor Oswald, whose bold tongue
Defam'd me to King Athelstan: to the ground
My sharp lance nail'd the caitiff.

[*Exit* Orgar.

Elf. Think, my Lord,
Will Athelwold, will he enter those lists,
Where conquest would be parricide? Alas,
He hears me not! Go, then, obdurate man!
A daughter's tears will but the more provoke thee.
I will not follow him. No, poor Elfrida!

All thou can'st do is here to wander and weep,
And feel that thou art wretched. [*Throws herself on a bank.*

RECITATIVE.

" Attend, ye sons of men! attend, and say,*
" Does not Truth's refulgent ray
" Break through the veil of your mortality?
" Say, does not reason in her form descry
" Nameless glories that surpass
" The Angel's pomp, the Seraph's grace?"

AIR.

" Know, mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
" Ere first these orbs in Ether hung,
" Truth shone amid the heav'nly throng:
" Her eyes beheld Creation's day,
" Her voice began the choral lay,
" And taught Archangels their triumphant song.

" Pleas'd, she survey'd bright Nature's gradual birth,
" Saw infant light, with kindling lustre spread,
" Soft fragrance clothe the flow'ring earth,
" And Ocean heave on his extended bed."

DUET *and* CHORUS.

" Last Man arose! the high behest was giv'n
" That she alone, of all the host of Heav'n,
" Should reign Protectress of the royal youth.
" Thus the Almighty spoke, and call'd her Truth."

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* The following passages, though a repetition of part of the Ode at the conclusion of Act III. are inserted afresh, because there they were omitted in representation, and are here performed in musical composition.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Continues. ELFRIDA, ALBINA, *&c. discovered, with attendant* Ladies.

Albina.

DEAREST mistress,
Restrain this flood of tears, perhaps——
Elf. Perhaps!
Ah! mock me not with hopes.
Albina. We do not mean it:
For hope, tho' 'tis pale Sorrow's only cordial,
Has yet a dull and opiate quality,
Enfeebling what it lulls. It suits not you;
For, as we fear——
Elf. Do you too fear? Alas!
I flatter'd my poor soul that all its fears
Were Grief's distemper'd coinage, that my love
Rais'd causeless apprehensions, and, at length,
Edgar would quite forgive. I do bethink me,
My joy broke forth too rashly. When they left us,
His safety was not half secur'd; my pleading
Was not half heard. I should have follow'd Edgar,
Claim'd more full pardon, forc'd him to embrace
My sorrowing Lord.
Albina. We fear that sorrow more
Than Edgar's rage. We fear his fallen virtue.
Self-condemnation works most strongly on him,
Ev'n to despondency. 'Ev'n at his pardon,
'No joy flush'd on his cheek; we mark'd him well,
'He shew'd no sign of welcome. No, he took it
As who should say: "To give me aught but death

Is a poor boon unwish'd and unaccepted."
Too much we fear he'll do some impious act———

Elf. What, on his life? I thought I had explor'd
Each various face of danger: this escap'd me.
How miss'd I this? It suits his courage highly;
Suits too his fix'd remorse. But yet he will not—
No, Athelwold, thou wilt not kill Elfrida.

Albina. Oh may his love preserve him! may these shades
Receive him soon in peace! To this blest end
You sure should strive to calm your father's rage;
At least not suffer him, as now, retir'd
To brood o'er his revenge. For know, Elfrida,
Beneath the silent gloom of solitude
Tho' Peace can sit and smile, tho' meek Content
Can keep the chearful tenor of her soul,
Ev'n in the loneliest shades; yet let not Wrath
Approach, let black Revenge keep far aloof,
Or soon they flame to madness.

Elf. True, my Virgins;
Attend me then: I'll try each winning art;
'Tho' ill such art becomes me, yet I'll aim it.'———
Hark—whence that noise? I heard some hasty footsteps.

Albina. Oh Heav'ns! 'tis Edwin.

Enter EDWIN.

Elf. Edwin, ah! that look
Bespeaks too well the horror of thy errand.
Tell it me all.

Edwin. Alas!———

Elf. Nay, do not pause.
Tell it me all. I think it will not kill me.
Repeat each circumstance. I'm ready, Edwin,
Ev'n for the worst.

Edwin. Then hear that worst, Elfrida.
Soon as the stag had left yon westward thicket,
The King dismiss'd his Lords, each several ways,
To their best sport, bidding Earl Athelwold,
Lord Ardulph, and myself, attend his person.
Thus parted from the rest, the Monarch pierc'd
A darkling dell, which open'd in a lawn
Thick set with elm around. Suddenly here
He turn'd his steed, and cry'd—" This place befits
Our purpose well."

Elf. Purpose! what purpose, Edwin?
'Twas predetermin'd then, dissembling tyrant!
How could I trust or hope——

Edwin. Yet give me hearing:
Thus with a grave composure, and calm eye,
King Edgar spake. Now hear me, Athelwold;
Thy King has pardon'd this thy trait'rous act:
From all disloyal baseness to thy Prince
Thou stand'st absolv'd; yet, know, there still remains
Somewhat to cancel more. As man to man,
As friend to friend, now, Athelwold, I call thee
Straight to defend thy life with thy good sword.
Nay, answer not; defend it gallantly.
If thy arm prosper, this my dying tongue
Shall pardon thee, and bless thee. If thou fall'st,
Thy parting breath must to my right resign
Elfrida's beauties. At the word, both drew,
Both fought; but Athelwold's was ill-play'd passion.
He aim'd his falchion at the Monarch's head,
Only to leave his own brave breast defenceless.
And on the instant Edgar's rapid sword
Pierc'd my dear master's heart. He fell to earth,
And, falling, cry'd—" This wound atones for all.

Edgar, thus full aveng'd, will pardon me,
And my true wife with chaste, connubial tears,
Embalm my memory." He smil'd, and dy'd,
Elf. Nay, come not round me, Virgins, nor support me
I do not swoon nor weep. I call not Heav'n
T' avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish
This tyrant's hand may wither with cold palsies.
No, I am very patient. Heav'n is just!
And when the measure of his crimes is full,
Will bare its red right arm, and lance its lightnings.
'Till then, ye elements, rest: and thou, firm Earth,
Ope not thy yawning jaws, but let this monster
Stalk his due time on thine affrighted surface.
Yes; let him still go on; still execute
His savage purposes, and daily make
More widows weep, as I do. Foolish eyes!
Why flow ye thus unbidden? What have tears
To do with grief like mine?
Albina. Help, help, my sisters,
To bear her to the castle.

Enter ORGAR.

Orgar. As I past,
Methought I heard a sound of loud lament;
Elfrida, ah!
Elf. Is not my father there?
Withhold me not; I'll fall at his dear feet.
Oh Sir! behold your child thus lowly prostrate;
Avenge her wrongs, avenge your poor Elfrida,
Your helpless, widow'd daughter.
Orgar. Widow'd daughter!
What, is he slain?
Elf. Inhospitably butcher'd;

'The tyrant's savage self'—Stand you thus cool?
'Where is the British spirit, where the fire
'Of Belin's race?—Oh foolishness of grief!'
Alas! I had forgot; had Edgar spar'd him,
That sword, to which my madness call'd for vengeance,
Ere long was meant to do the bloody deed,
And make the murder parricide. Have I
No friend to do me right?

Orgar. Thou hast, my child;
I am thy friend, thy father. Trust my care.
'Edwin, a word.' Retire, my dearest daughter;
Virgins, conduct her in.

Elf. My father, no!
What do you do? I must not be withheld.
I'll to yon bloody grove, and clasp my husband,
My murder'd husband. Why restrain me, Sir?
Can my sad eye dart fire through his cold breast,
And light up life anew?

Orgar. Go in, my child,
And seek tranquility.

Elf. Tranquility!
I know her well; she is Death's pale-ey'd sister;
She's now in yonder grove, closing the lids
Of my poor Athelwold. That office done,
She'll bear his soul upon her gentle plumes
Up to the realms of joy. I'll follow them:
I know he'd have it so: he'll not be blest,
Ev'n on his throne of bliss, till I am with him.

Albina. This way, my dearest mistress.

Elf. Hold, nay hold;
Croud not around me. Let me pause a while.
Albina, thou alone shalt join my mis'ry;

I've much to utter to thy friendly ear.
Lead on, thou gentle maid; thy single arm
Shall prop my trembling frame; thy single voice
Speak peace to my afflictions. [*Exit with* Albina.

Orgar. On your lives,
Virgins, let no disturbing step approach her.
Say, Edwin (for I guess 'twas you that brought
These tidings hither) where was royal Edgar,
When late you left him?

Edwin. At my master's side,
Repentant of the stroke.

Orgar. Comes he not back
To Harewood?

Edwin. Heav'n forbid! Elfrida's brain
Would madden at the sight.

Orgar. Mistake me not;
I did not mean at this distressful hour
The King should see my daughter.

Edwin. No, for pity,
Do not profane this sabbath of her grief.
Oh! be her sorrow sacred!

Orgar. Fear it not,
Her peace is my best care, and, to ensure it,
I'll, by your guidance, Edwin, haste this instant,
To find the Monarch. Some four miles from Harewood
Stands old Earl Egbert's castle, my fast friend.
With him will I persuade the King to sojourn,
Till my child's grief abate: that too to speed
Be it your business, Virgins. 'Watching ever
'Each happy interval, when your soft tongues
'May hint his praises, till, by practice won,
'She bear their fuller blazon.' Elfrid's welfare

Requires this friendly office at your hands;
And Edgar's virtues bear such genuine lustre,
That Truth itself directs.——— [*Exit* Orgar.

Edwin. As Truth directs,
So only should you act. This day has shewn
What dire effects await its violation.
'Straight is the road of Truth, and plain;
'And, tho' across the sacred way
'Ten thousand erring footsteps stray,
'Tis our's to walk direct,
'And, with sage caution circumspect,
'Pace slowly through the solemn scene.'

Enter ALBINA.

Albina. Has Orgar left the grove?

Edwin. He has, Albina.

Albina. Then hear, and aid Elfrida's last resolve,
Who takes the only way stern Fate has left
To save her plighted faith for ever pure
To her dead Athelwold.

'*Edwin.* Forbid it, Patience!
'Forbid it, that submissive calm of soul,
'Which teaches meek-ey'd Piety to smile
'Beneath the scourge of Heav'n!

'*Albina.* You need not fear it,
'She means not self-destruction. Thanks to heav'n,
'Huge and o'erbearing as her mis'ry is,
'It cannot so oblit'rate from her breast
'The written rule of duty.' Her pure soul
Means on the instant to devote itself
To heav'n and holiness. Assist her straight,
Lest Edgar's presence and her father's rage
Prevent the blest intention. See, she comes.

Enter ELFRIDA.

'Kneel on each side, devoutly kneel around her.'
Now breathe some note in high and solemn strain,
That Angels from their thrones of Light may hear,
And ratify her vow.

ELFRIDA *kneels, and the* Virgins *divide into two Troops.*

Albina. Hear, Angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of Light;
And oh! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.

CHORUS.

" Then wing your solemn flight
" Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
" Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
" 'Mid the dread records of Eternity."

Elf. Hear first, that Athelwold's sad widow swears,
To rear a hallow'd convent o'er the place
Where stream'd his blood; there will she weep through life,
Immur'd with this chaste throng of Virgins; there
Each day shall six times hear her full-voic'd choir
Chaunt the slow requiem o'er her martyr'd lord;
There too, when midnight low'rs with awful gloom,
She'll rise observant of the stated call
Of waking grief, bear the dim livid taper
Along the winding isles, and at the altar,
Kiss ev'ry pale shrine with her trembling lips,
Press the cold stone with her bent knee, and call
On sainted Athelwold.

CHORUS.

" Hear, Angels, hear,
" Hear from these nether thrones of Light;

" And oh! in golden characters record
" Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
" Then wing your solemn flight
" Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
" Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
" 'Mid the dread records of Eternity."

Elf. Hear next, that Athelwold's sad widow swears
Never to violate the holy vow
She to his truth first plighted; swears to bear
The sober singleness of widowhood
To her cold grave. If from this chaste resolve
She ev'n in thought should swerve; if gaudy pomp
Or flatt'ring greatness e'er should tempt one wish
To stray beyond this purpose, may that Heav'n,
Which hears this vow, punish its violation,
As heav'nly justice ought!

CHORUS.

" Hear, Angels, hear,
" Hear from these nether thrones of Light;
" And oh! in golden characters record
" Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
" Then wing your solemn flight
" Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
" Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
" 'Mid the dread records of Eternity."

7 Л 52

SAMSON AGONISTES.

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF

THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

BY JOHN MILTON.

LONDON:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE LIFE OF JOHN MILTON.

FROM a family and town of his name in Oxfordshire our author derived his descent; but he was born at London in the year 1608. His father, John Milton, by profession a Scrivener, lived in a reputable manner on a competent estate, entirely his own acquisition; having been early disinherited by his parents for renouncing the communion of the Church of Rome, to which they were zealously devoted. By his wife Sarah Caston he had likewise one daughter, named Anna; and another son, Christopher, whom he trained to the practice of the Common Law, and who attained to the dignity of Judge of the Common Pleas; of which he died divested not long after the Revolution.

But John, the subject of the present essay, was the favourite of his father's hopes; who, to cultivate the great genius which early displayed itself, was at the expence of a domestic tutor. At his initiation (when twelve years of age) he is said to have applied himself to letters with such indefatigable industry, that he rarely was prevailed with to quit his studies before midnight. From a domestic education he was removed to St. Paul's School, to complete his acquaintance with the classics; and after a short stay there, (at the age of fifteen) was transplanted to Christ-College in Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in all kinds of academical exercises. Of this society he continued a member till he commenced Master of Arts, and then retired to his father's seat at Horton in Buckinghamshire (at the age of twenty-three); where he pursued his studies with unparalleled assiduity and success, for some years.

His mother dying, he prevailed with his father to gratify an inclination he had long entertained of seeing foreign countries

(then aged thirty.) Having employed his curiosity about two years in France and Italy, on the news of a civil war breaking out in England, he returned, without taking a survey of Greece and Sicily, as at his setting out the scheme was projected. At Paris the Lord Viscount Scudamore, ambassador from King Charles I. introduced him to the acquaintance of Grotius; who at that time was honoured with the same character there by Christina Queen of Sweden. In Rome, Genoa, Florence, and other cities of Italy, he contracted a familiarity with those who were of the highest reputation for wit and learning: several of whom gave him very obliging testimonies of their friendship and esteem, which are printed before his Latin poems.

Returning from his travels (at the age of thirty-two) he found England on the point of being involved in blood and confusion. He resided in the city; where he undertook the education of his sister's sons, and some other young gentlemen.

In this philosophical course he continued without a wife to the year 1643 (aged thirty-five); when he married Mary the daughter of Richard Powel of Forest-hill in Oxfordshire: a gentleman of estate and reputation in that county; and of principles so very opposite to his son-in-law, that the marriage is more to be wondered, than the separation which ensued, in little more than a month after she had cohabited with him in London. Soon after, in a visit at one of his relations, he found his wife prostrate before him, imploring forgiveness and reconciliation. It is not to be doubted but an interview of that nature, so little expected, must wonderfully affect him; and perhaps the impressions it made on his imagination contributed much to the painting of that pathetic scene in Paradise Lost, in which Eve addresseth herself to Adam for pardon and peace. At the intercession of his friends who were present, after a short reluctance, he generously sacrified all his resentment to her tears: and after this re-union, so far was he from retaining an unkind memory

of the provocations which he had received from her ill conduct, that when the King's cause was entirely oppressed, and her father, who had been active in his loyalty, was exposed to sequestration, Milton received both him and his family to protection and free entertainment in his own house till their affairs were accommodated by his interest in the victorious party.

For (at the age of forty-one) he was now grown famous by his polemical writings of various kinds, and held in great favour and esteem by those who had power to dispose of all preferments in the state. Although the spoils of his country lay at his feet, neither his conscience nor his honour could stoop to gather them: for it is affirmed, that he lived always in a frugal retirement, and before his death had disposed of his library, which we may suppose to have been a valuable collection: he left no more than fifteen hundred pounds behind him for the support of his family.

In the forty-second year of his age a commission to constitute him Adjutant-General to Sir William Waller was promised; but soon superseded by Waller's being laid aside. However, the keenness of his pen had so effectually recommended him to Cromwell's esteem, that when he took the reins of government into his own hand, he advanced him to be Latin Secretary, both to himself and the Parliament: the former of these preferments he enjoyed both under Cromwell and his son; the other till King Charles II. was restored. Not long after his wife died in childbed: and much about the time of her death, a gutta serena, which had for several years been gradually increasing, totally extinguished his sight. In this melancholic condition he was easily prevailed with to think of taking another wife; who was Catherine the daughter of Captain Woodcock of Hackney; and she too, in less than a year after their marriage, died in the same unfortunate manner as the former had done; and in his twenty-third sonnet he does honour to her memory.

When fifty-two years old, he married Elizabeth the daughter of Mr. Minshul, a Cheshire gentleman, by whom he had no issue. Three daughters by his first wife were then living; the two elder of whom are said to have been very serviceable to him in his studies. For, having been instructed to pronounce not only the modern, but also the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, they read in their respective originals whatever authors he wanted to consult; though they understood none but their mother-tongue.

We come now to take a survey of him in that point of view, in which he will be looked on by all succeeding ages with equal delight and admiration. An interval of above twenty years had elapsed since he wrote the Mask of * Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and † Lycidas; all in such an exquisite strain, that though he had left no other monuments of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal. But, neither the infirmities of age and constitution, nor the vicissitudes of fortune, could depress the vigour of his mind, or divert it from executing a design he had long conceived of writing an Heroic Poem.

In the year 1669 (and sixty-first year of his age) he published his Paradise Lost, the noblest poem, perhaps, that ever the wit of man produced.

And now perhaps it may pass for fiction, what with great veracity we affirm to be a fact, that Milton, after having with much difficulty prevailed to have this divine Poem licensed for the press, could sell the copy for no more than fifteen pounds: the payment of which valuable consideration depended on the sale of three numerous impressions. So unreasonably may personal prejudice affect the most excellent performances! About two years after, (at the age of sixty-three) together with Samson Agonistes, he published Paradise Regained.

* Aged 26. † Aged 29.

And thus having attended him to the sixty-sixth year of his age, as closely as such imperfect lights as men of letters and retirement usually leave to guide our inquiry would allow; it now only remains to be recorded, that in the year 1674, (at the age of 66-7) the gout put a period to his life, at Bunhill, near London; from whence his body was conveyed to St. Giles's church by Cripplegate, where it lies interred in the Chancel: but neither has, nor wants, a monument to perpetuate his memory.

In his youth he is said to have been extremely handsome: the colour of his hair was a light-brown; the symmetry of his features exact; enlivened with an agreeable air, and a beautiful mixture of fair and ruddy: which occasioned the Marquis of Villa to give his epigram the same turn of thought, which Gregory Arch-Deacon of Rome had employed above a thousand years before in praising the amiable complexions of some English youths, before their conversion to Christianity. His stature did not exceed the middle-size; neither too lean, nor corpulent: his limbs well proportioned, nervous, and active; serviceable in all respects to his exercising the sword, in which he much delighted. In his diet he was abstemious; and strong liquors of all kinds were his aversion. In his latter years he went to bed at nine and got up at five o'clock in the morning. When blindness restrained him from other exercises, he had a machine to swing in, for the preservation of his health; and diverted himself in his chamber with playing on an organ. His deportment was erect, open, affable; his conversation easy, cheerful, instructive; his wit on all occasions at command, facetious, grave, or satirical, as the subject required. His judgement was just and penetrating; his apprehension, quick; his memory, tenacious of what he read; his reading, only not so extensive as his genius, for that was universal. And having treasured up such immense stores of science, perhaps the faculties of his soul grew more vigorous after he was deprived of his sight: and his imagination

(naturally sublime, and enlarged by reading Romances, of which he was much enamoured in his youth) when it was wholly abstracted from material objects, was more at liberty to make such amazing excursions into the ideal world, when in composing his divine work he was tempted to range

Beyond the visible diurnal sphere.

It is reported, (and there is a passage in one of his Latin Elegies to countenance the tradition) that his fancy made the happiest flights in the spring: but one of his nephews used to deliver it as Milton's own observation, that his invention was in its highest perfection from September to the Vernal Equinox.

CHARACTER OF SAMSON AGONISTES.

THIS piece is written in imitation of the Greek tragic poets, more particularly Æschylus.

The measure is not regular, being composed of every kind indiscriminately blended together. The speaking scenes are relieved and explained by *Choruses*, and all the regular constraint of division into acts and scenes is totally avoided, the poem having never been intended by the author for the stage, who strongly laboured to render it admirable for the closet. So noble, so just, so elegant, so poetical is the diction of it, that the great Mr. Dryden, whose imagination might be supposed to be equal to that of any man, has transferred many thoughts of this piece into his tragedy of *Aureng-zebe*.

Bishop Atterbury once pressed Mr. Pope to polish and adapt this piece. 'If,' says he, 'upon a new perusal of it, you think as I do, that it is written in the very spirit of the ancients, it deserves your care, and is capable of being improved, with little trouble, into a perfect model and standard of tragic poetry.'

A Mr. Dixon, of Dublin, in 1741, is said to have at length adapted it for the stage; but, owing to a dispute among the proprietors of the theatre, it was never performed. He introduced so great a number of characters, that every performer of consequence in the theatre, whether actor, singer, or dancer, had a part alloted to him for the illustration of the piece.

THE ARGUMENT.

SAMSON made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition: where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his Tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaim'd by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons; and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or shew his strength in their presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him: the Chorus yet remaining on the place. Manoah returns, full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance, in the midst of which discourse an Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

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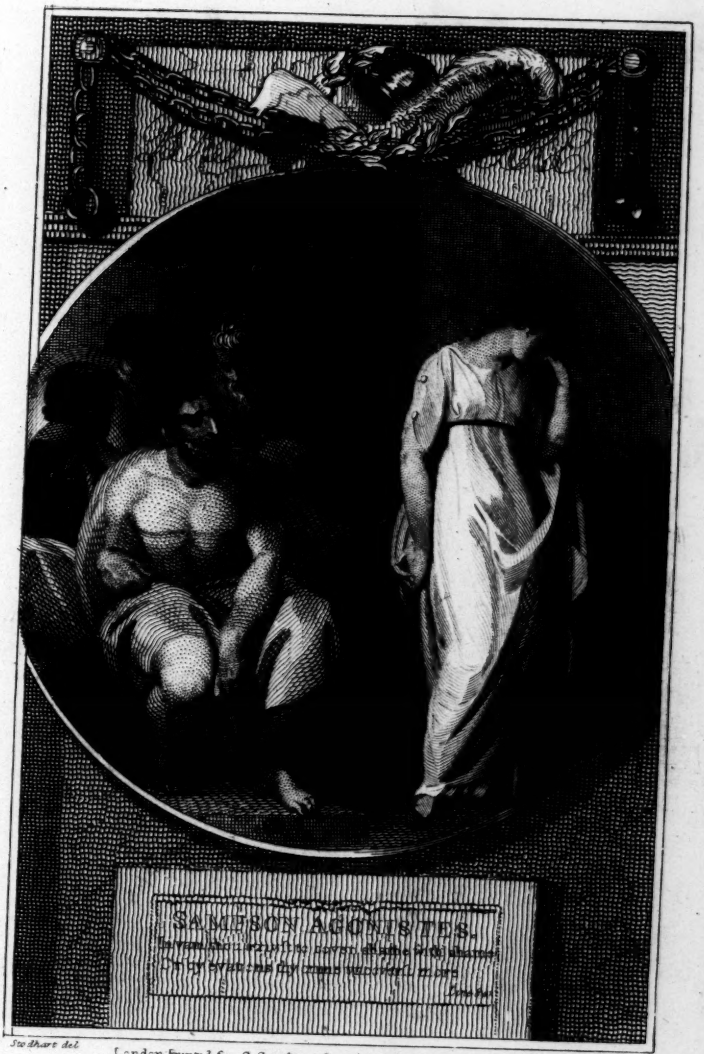
Graham del. Audinet fc.

SAMPSON AGONISTES.

Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease

London Printed for J. Cawthorn British Library Strand Dec.ber 1798



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SAMSON AGONISTES.

Samson.

A LITTEE onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:
There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily' in the common prison else enjoin'd me,
Where I a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,
The breath of heav'n, fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon, their sea-idol, and forbid
Laborious works; unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
Oh wherefore was my birth from Heav'n foretold

Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents, all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength,
Put to the labour of a beast; debas'd
Lower than bond-slave! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke:
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom, vast, unweildy, burthensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,

But to subserve where wisdom bears command!
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know:
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries;
So many and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail: but chief of all,
Oh loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me' is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see; I dark in light expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!
O first created beam, and thou great word,
Let there be light, and light was over all;
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light,
As in the land of darkness yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And bury'd: but O yet more miserable!
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave,
Bury'd, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains, and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way;
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice to afflict me more.

Chor. This, this is he; softly a while,
Let us not break in upon him;
O change beyond report, thought or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish'd head unpropt,
As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill fitted weeds

O'er-worn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? whom, unarm'd,
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,
Ran on imbattel'd armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail
Adamantean proof;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanc'd,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel;
Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets in the dust.
Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
A thousand fore-skins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Ramath-lechi famous to this day.
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore
The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar,
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,
No journey of a sabbath-day, and loaded so;
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)

The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darknes of the body dwells,
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night;
For inward light, alas!
Puts forth no visual beam.
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparallel'd!
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wond'rous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n,
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

Sam. I hear the sound of words, their sense the air
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

Chor. He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to swage
The tumours of a troubled mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

Sam. Your coming, friends, revives me, for I learn
Now of my own experience, not by talk,

How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
Bear in their superscription, (of the most
I would be understood) in prosp'rous days
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,
Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have inclos'd me round:
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
Blindness—for had I sight, confus'd with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who like a foolish pilot have shipwreck'd
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,
Fool, have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman? Tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say, how well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?
Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd,
These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.

Chor. Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thy own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

Sam. The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not

That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
from intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquish'd with a peal of words (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

Chor. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

Sam. That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,
Who seeing those great acts, which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerors,
Acknowledg'd not, or not all consider'd
Deliverance offer'd: I on the other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer:
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords the Philistines, with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place

To set upon them, what advantag'd best:
Mean while the men of Judah, to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round;
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
Touch'd with the flame: on their whole host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom they now serve:
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd
As their deliverer; if he ought begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

Chor. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jeptha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle, when so many died

Without reprieve adjudg'd to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.
Sam. Of such examples add me to the roll,
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd deliverance not so.
Chor. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be who think not God at all;
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.
Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wand'ring thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;
Till by their own perplexities involv'd
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine th' Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to' exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.
He would not else who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of th' enemy just cause
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vows of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,

Unclean, unchaste.
Down reason then, at least vain reasonings down,
Though reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of unclean:
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain, not his.
But see here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah: advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.
Sam. Ay me, another inward grief awak'd
With mention of that name renews th' assault.
Man. Brethren, and men of Dan, for such ye seem,
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,
As I suppose, tow'ards your once glory'd friend,
My son now captive, hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age
Came lagging after; say if he be here?
Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in high'est, behold him where he lies.
Man. O miserable change! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels, walk'd their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant
Duel'd their armies rank'd in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length? O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and O what not in man
Deceivable and vain? Nay, what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a son,

And such a son as all men hail'd me happy;
Who would be now a father in my stead?
O wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest pray'rs, then giv'n with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
For this did th' angel twice descend? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men; then in an hour
Insnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foe's derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves?
Alas, methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be' it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

Sam. Appoint not heav'nly disposition, father;
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who' have profan'd
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her heighth
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies

And rivals? In this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
Her spurious first-born, treason against me?
Thrice she assay'd with flattering pray'rs and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know;
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself;
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,
With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me overwatch'd, and weary'd out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest:
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd,
Might easily have shook off all her snares;
But foul effeminacy held me yok'd
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fall'n.
These rags, this grinding is not yet so base
As was my former servitude ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.

Man. I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son,
Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over potent charms
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee; which to have kept
Tacit was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,
This day the Philistines a popular feast
Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnify'd, and God,
Besides whom is no god, compar'd with idols
Disglorify'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befall'n thee and thy father's house.

Sam. Father, I do acknowledge and confess
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high
Among the Heathen round; to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths

Of idolists and atheists; have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts propense enough before
To waver, or fall off and join with idols;
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presum'd,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,
But will arise and his great name assert:
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers. [words

Man. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these
I as a prophecy receive; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?
Thou must not in the mean while, here forgot,
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom: well they may by this
Have satisfy'd their utmost of revenge

By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.
Sam. Spare that proposal, father; spare the trouble
Of that solicitation: let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front?
But I God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully: a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confin'd.
Man. Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thy own affliction, son:
Repent the sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Whoever more approves and more accepts;
(Best pleas'd with humble' and filial submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
Than who self-rigorous chooses death as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means; who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee

Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou may'st bring thy offerings, to avert
His further ire, with pray'rs and vows renew'd?

Sam. His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from heav'n foretold and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Soften'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shav'n, and disarm'd, among mine enemies.

Chor. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior overturns,
Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

Sam. Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod,
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying

Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envy'd them the grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.
Chor. O madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God with these forbidd'n made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.
Sam. But what avail'd this temp'rance, not complete
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish'd? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burd'nous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pity'd object, these redundant locks
Robustious to no purpose clust'ring down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure?
Here let me rather drudge and earn my bread,
Till vermine and the draff of servile food
Consume me, and oft-invoked death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.
Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to' allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy

Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so; why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
His might continues in thee not for nought,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

Sam. All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor th' other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself,
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

Man. Believe not these suggestions which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I however
Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransom, or how else: mean while be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends admit.

Sam. O that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast and reins;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.

My griefs not only pain me
As a ling'ring disease,
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts my tormentors arm'd with deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
Or medicinal liquor can asswage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er
To death's benumming opium as my only cure:
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heav'n's desertion.
I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heav'nly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds,
Above the nerve of mortal arm,
Against th' uncircumcis'd, our enemies:
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provok'd;
Left me all helpless, with th' irreparable loss
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless:
This one prayer yet remains, might I beard,

No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.
Chor. Many are the sayings of the wise
In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolitaries writ
With study'd argument, and much persuasion sought,
Lenient of grief and anxious thought:
But with th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
Harsh, aud of dissonant mood from his complaint;
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above,
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.
God of our fathers, what is man!
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not ev'nly, as thou rul'st
Th' angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That wand'ring loose about
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name no more remember'd,
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they' effect:
Yet towards these thus dignify'd, thou oft

'Amidst their height of noon
Changest thy count'nance, and thy hand with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
But throws them lower than thou didst exalt them high,
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of th' ungrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty,
With sickness and disease, thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases, and deform'd,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suff'ring
The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
Just or unjust alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.
So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,
The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.
But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles

Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,
And now at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

Sam. My wife, my traitress, let her not come near me!

Chor. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About t'have spoke, but now, with head declin'd
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.

Dal. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I come, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge: yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though my pardon
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in thy power;
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sam. Out, out, hyæna! these are thy wonted arts,

And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Intangled with a pois'nous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me, Samson; not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence,
But that on the other side if it be weigh'd
By' itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier tow'ards me, or thy hatred less.
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults;
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is for nought,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
To what I did, thou showed'st me first the way.

But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not:
Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's frailty:
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parley,
So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mine tow'ards thee,
Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave me
As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
How to indear, and hold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by' importuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
The key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,
Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those
Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
Against thee but safe custody and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprizes,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
Mine and Love's prisoner, not the Philistines,
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well-meaning, wrought much woe,
Yet always pity' or pardon hath obtain'd.

Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sam. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th' example,
I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false ere thou to me;
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd: weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to' have love;
My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
In vain shou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,

The constantest, to' have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me; thou know'st the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urg'd,
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion, press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious to intrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to insnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
To' oppose against such powerful arguments?
Only my love of thee held long debate,
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Sam. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy:
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I, before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation, chose thee from among
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but over-power'd

By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd?
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection but my own,
Thou mine, not theirs; if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations,
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear;
Not therefore to be' obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee;
To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable
To' acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds; the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be;
Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear?

Dal. In argument with men, a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sam. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath;
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and, quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,
Afford me place to show what recompence
Tow'ards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist

To' afflict thyself in vain: though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age,
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so supply'd,
That what by me thou' hast lost thou least shalt miss.

Sam. No, no, of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain:
Nor think me so unwary or accurs'd,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins and toils;
Thy fair inchanted cup, and warbling charms,
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries,
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could'st hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thraldom, how again betray me,

Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?
This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.
Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.
Sam. Not for thy life, least fierce remembrance wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee, go with that;
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives:
Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
Of matrimonial treason: so farewel.
Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers than winds and seas, yet winds to seas
Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempests, never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
Bid go with evil omen and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounc'd?
To mix with thy concernments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame if not double-fac'd is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
My name perhaps among the circumcis'd
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defam'd,
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd.

But in my country, where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be nam'd among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers;
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim
Jael, who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward
Conferr'd upon me for the piety
Which to my country I was judg'd to' have shown.
At this who ever envies or repines,
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sam. So let her go, God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

Chor. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily
Repuls'd, without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

Sam. Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,
Not wedlock-treachery indang'ring life.

Chor. It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit
That woman's love can win or long inherit,

But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or sev'n, though one should musing sit.
If any of these or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymph, worthless to thee compar'd,
Successor in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disally'd
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long?
Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heav'nly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry inslav'd
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?

Favour'd of Heav'n who finds
One virtuous rarely found,
That in domestic good combines:
Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptable above.
Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
But had we best retire, I see a storm?
Sam. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.
Chor. But this another kind of tempest brings.
Sam. Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.
Chor. Look now for no inchanting voice, nor fear
The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither
I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.
Sam. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.
Chor. His fraught we soon shall know—he now arrives.
Har. I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,

Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd
As Og or Anak and the Emmims old
That Kiriathaim held, thou know'st me now
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have try'd
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

Sam. The way to know were not to see but taste.

Har. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee. O that Fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art fam'd
To' have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory' of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine,
From the unforeskin'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts; that honour
Certain to' have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

Sam. Boast not of what thou would'st have done, but do
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand.

Har. To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

Sam. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me' assassinated and betray'd,
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,

Nor in the house with chamber ambushes
Close-banded durst attack me, no not sleeping
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd
Some narrow place inclos'd, where sight may give thee,
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
Vant-brass and greves, and gauntlet, add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and sev'n-times-folded shield,
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shalt not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast
Again in safety what thou would'st have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black inchantments, some magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from heav'n
Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
Of chaf'd wild boars or ruffled porcupines.

Sam. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
My trust is in the living God who gave me
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.

For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invocate his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With th' utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

Har. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hands, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
As good for nothing else, no better service
With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.

Sam. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant:
In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

Har. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.
Sam. Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me these?
Har. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker and deliver'd bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence, nor spoil.
Sam. Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who threat'ning cruel death constrain'd the bride
To wring from me and tell to them the secret,
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd.
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd,
I us'd hostility and took their spoil
To pay my underminers in their coin:
My nation was subjected to your lords.
It was the force of conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.
But I a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd
Single rebellion and did hostile acts.

I was no private, but a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.
I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,
As a petty enterprize of small enforce.

Har. With thee a man condemn'd, a slave inroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment;
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

Sam. Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd;
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

Har. O Baalzebub! can my ears unus'd
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

Sam. No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

Har. This insolence other kind of answer fits.

Sam. Go baffled coward, lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To th' hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

Har. By Astorath, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

Chor. His Giantship is gone somewhat crest-fall'n,
Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.
Sam. I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,
Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliath chief.
Chor. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to' afflict thee.
Sam. He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept th' offer or not,
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain,
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.
Chor. Oh how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppress'd,
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;

He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd;
Their armories and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpriz'd
Lose their defence, distracted and amaz'd.
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That Tyranny or Fortune can inflict.
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might indued
Above the sons of men; but sight bereav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.
This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.
Of. Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.
Chor. His manacles remark him, there he sits.

Of. Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say;
This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games;
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly;
Rise therefore with all speed and come along
Where I will see thee hearten'd and fresh clad
To' appear as fits before th' illustrious lords.

Sam. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.

Of. This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

Sam. Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,
And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

Of. Regard thyself, this will offend them highly.

Sam. Myself? my conscience and internal peace.
Can they think me so broken, so debas'd
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands;
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will not come.

Of. My message was impos'd on me with speed,

Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?
Sam. So take it with what speed thy message needs.
Of. I'm sorry what this stoutness will produce.
Sam. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.
Chor. Consider, Samson, matters now are strain'd
Up to the heighth, whether to hold or break;
He's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious;
More lordly thund'ring than thou well wilt bear.
Sam. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols;
A Nazarite in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon?
Besides how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane?
Chor. Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.
Sam. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.
Chor. Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.
Sam. Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds.
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging? the Philistian lords command.
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, vent'ring to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind: which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee

Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.
Chor. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.
Sam. Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be ought of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.
Chor. In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns.
Of. Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,
And dar'st thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.
Sam. I could be well content to try their art
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.
Yet knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through their streets
Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
Masters' commands come with a power resistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his purpose?
(So mutable are all the ways of men)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous or forbidden in our law.
Of. I praise thy resolution: doff these links:

By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sam. Brethren, farewel! your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
Of me as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,
I know not: lords are lordliest in their wine;
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fir'd
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd;
No less the people on their holy-days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, and myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

Chor. Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name
Great among the Heathen round;
Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that Spirit that first rush'd on thee
In the camp of Dan
Be efficacious in thee now at need.
For never was from Heav'n imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps? much livelier than ere while
He seems: supposing here to find his son,

Or of him bringing to us some glad news?
Man. Peace with you, bretheren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came, the city rings,
And numbers thither flock; I had no will
Lest I should see him forc'd to things unseemly.
But that which mov'd my coming now was chiefly
To give ye part with we what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.
Chor. That hope would much rejoice us to partake
With thee; say, reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.
Man. I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone and father's tears,
To' accept of ransom for my son their pris'ner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his priest:
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and state
They easily would set to sale: a third
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc'd
Their foe to misery beneath their fears:
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.
What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.
Chor. Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.
Man. His ransom, if my whole inheritance

May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down: much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit: not wanting him I shall want nothing.

Chor. Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all:
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son
Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.

Man. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd:
And I persuade me God hath not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
To use him further yet in some great service,
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

Chor. Thy hopes are not ill-founded, nor seem vain
Of his delivery, and the joy thereon
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a father's love,
In both which we, as next, participate.

Man. I know your friendly minds and—O what noise!
Mercy of Heav'n, what hideous noise was that!

Horribly loud, unlike the former shout!

Chor. Noise call you it or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd!
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

Man. Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise:
Oh it continues, they have slain my son!

Chor. Thy son is rather slaying them, that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

Man. Some dismal accident it needs must be,
What shall we do, stay here or run and see?

Chor. Best keep together here, lest running thither
We unawares run into danger's mouth:
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n;
From whom could else a general cry be heard?
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,
From other hands we need not much to fear.
What if his eye-sight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought!

Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old; what hinders now?

Man. He can I know, but doubt to think he will.
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
For evil news rides post, while good news baits:
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew as I guess, and of our tribe.

Mes. O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,

Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason, though disturb'd, and scarce consulted,
To' have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first reverend Manoah, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not;
No preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

Mes. It would burst forth—but I recover breath
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

Man. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Mes. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fall'n,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

Man. Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest
The desolation of a hostile city.

Mes. Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfeit

Man. Relate by whom?

Mes. By Samson.

Man. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mes. Ah Manoah! I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

Man. Suspence in news is torture, speak them out.

Mes. Take then the worst in brief, Samson is dead.

Man. The worst indeed. O all my hopes defeated
To free him hence! but death who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.

What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first-born bloom of Spring
Nipt with the lagging rear of Winter's frost!
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first
How died he; death to life is crown or shame:
All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he,
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound?
Mes. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.
Man. Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.
Mes. By his own hands.
Man. Self-violence? what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with himself
Among his foes?
Mes. Inevitable cause
At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.
Man. O lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.
Mes. Occasions drew me early to this city,
And as the gates I enter'd with sun-rise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high-street: little I had dispatch'd,
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth to show the people
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.

The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats where all the lords and each degree
Of sort might sit in order to behold;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went arm'd guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts, and spears.
At sight of him the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamoring their god with praise,
Who' had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He patient but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place, and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd,
All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tir'd to let him lean a while
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsuspicious led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclin'd,
And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who pray'd,

Or some greater matter in his mind revolv'd:
At last with head erect thus cry'd aloud,
Hitherto, lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld:
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself;
The vulgar only 'scap'd who stood without.

Chor. O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more
Than all thy life hath slain before.

1. *Semichor.* While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,

And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,
Chaunting their idol, and preferring
Before our living dread who dwells
In Silo his bright sanctuary:
Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer;
They only set on sport and play
Unweetingly importun'd
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselvs to' invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

2. *Semichor.* But he though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening dragon came,
Assailant on the perched roosts,
And nests in order rang'd
Of tame villatic fowl; but as an eagle
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So Virtue giv'n for lost,
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird
In the Arabian woods imbost,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay ere while a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd,

Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd,
And though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man. Come, come, no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully reveng'd hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds, to Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
To' himself and father's house eternal fame,
And which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted with, as was fear'd,
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Sok'd in his enemies' blood, and from the stream
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy and funeral train
Home to his father's house: there will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd

In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high;
The virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his tomb with flow'rs, only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor. All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind all passion spent.

7 JU 52

CREUSA,

QUEEN OF ATHENS.

A

TRAGEDY.

By WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Managers.

The Lines distinguished by double inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR, AND UNDER THE DIRECTION OF,

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1797.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

THIS gentleman was the son of a tradesman in the town of Cambridge, and was a member of Clare-Hall. He accompanied the Lords Viscount Nuneham and Villiers, sons of the Earls of Harcourt and Jersey, in their travels during the years 1754, 1755, and 1756. In 1757 he was appointed poet laureat, on the death of Colley Cibber, together with that of register of the order of the Bath. He is the author of several poetical works of considerable merit, and the following dramatic pieces:—1. *The Roman Father*, T. 1750.—2. *Fatal Constancy*, a Sketch, 1753.—3. *Creusa, Queen of Athens*, T. 1754.—4. *The School for Lovers*, C. 1762.—5. *A Trip to Scotland*, F. 1770.

CHARACTER OF CREUSA.

THIS tragedy is founded on the *Ion* of Euripides. But the subject is so ancient, so slightly mentioned by historians, and so fabulously treated by Euripides, that the author thought himself at liberty to make the story his own.

The plot is extremely heightened, and admirably conducted by our author; nor has there, perhaps, ever been a more genuine and native simplicity introduced into dramatic writing, than that of the youth Ilyssus, bred up in the service of the Gods, and kept unacquainted with the vices of mankind.

This play is dedicated to Lord Viscount Villiers.

PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUES of old, the learn'd in language say,
Were merely introductions to the play,
Spoken by gods, or ghosts, or men who knew
Whate'er was previous to the scenes in view;
And complaisantly came to lay before ye
The several heads and windings of the story.
But modern times and British rules are such,
Our bards beforehand must not tell too much;
Nor dare we, like the neighb'ring French, admit
Ev'n confidantes, who might instruct the pit,
By asking questions of the leading few,
And hearing secrets, which before they knew.
Yet what we can to help this antique piece
We will attempt. Our scene to-night is Greece.
And, by the magic of the poet's rod,
This stage the temple of the Delphic God!
Where kings, and chiefs, and sages came of old,
Like modern fools, to have their fortunes told;
And monarchs were enthron'd, or nations freed,
As an old priest, or wither'd maid decreed.
Yet think not all were equally deceiv'd,
Some knew, more doubted, many more believ'd.
In short, these oracles and witching rhimes
Were but the pious frauds of ancient times;
Wisely contriv'd to keep mankind in awe,
When faith was wonder, and religion law!
Thus much premis'd, to every feeling breast
We leave the scenes themselves to tell the rest.
—Yet something sure was to the critics said,
Which I forget,—some invocation made!
Ye critic bands, like jealous guardians plac'd
To watch th' encroachments on the realms of taste,

From you our author would two boons obtain,
Not wholly diffident, nor wholly vain:
Two things he asks; 'tis modest sure, from you
Who can do all things, to request but two:
First, to his scenes a kind attention pay,
Then judge!—with candour judge—and we obey.

Dramatis Personæ.

Men.

XUTHUS, King of Athens, - - -	MR. BARRY.
ILYSSUS, an unknown Youth, attendant on the Temple at Delphi, -	MISS MACKLIN.
ALETES, a Grecian Sage, - - -	MR. GARRICK.
PHORBAS, an old Athenian, - -	MR. MOSSOP.
PRIESTS of Apollo.	
CITIZENS of Athens.	

Women.

CREUSA, Queen of Athens, - -	MRS. BARRY.
PYTHIA, Priestess of Apollo, - -	MISS HAUGHTON.
LYCEA, and other Women, attending on the Queen, - - -	MRS. COWPER, &c.
VIRGINS belonging to the Temple,	
GUARDS, &c.	

Scene, The Vestibule of the Temple of *Apollo* at *Delphi*, and the Laurel Grove adjoining.

7 JU 52

Act I **CREUSA.** Sc 1

Graham del. Long f.

Mr. CROUCH as PYTHIA.

By — I feel, I feel within
A Heav'n born impulse —

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7 JU 52

CREUSA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Vestibule of the Temple. Enter ILYSSUS *and Virgins.*

ILYSSUS.

HASTE, haste, ye virgins! round the columns twine
Your flowery chaplets; and with streams fresh drawn
Of Castaly, bedew the sacred porch
Of the great God of Day. Already see
His orient beam has reach'd the double top
Of high Parnassus, and begins to shed
A gleamy lustre o'er the laurel grove!
Haste, haste, ye virgins! From the vale beneath
I hear the noise of chariots and of steeds,
Which hither bend their course; for every sound
Seems nearer than the former.——And behold
A rev'rend stranger, who perhaps proclaims
Th' approach of some great monarch, to consult
All-seeing Phœbus, or implore his aid.
Haste, haste, ye virgins!

Enter PHORBAS.

Phor. Tell me, gentle maids,
And thou, fair youth, who seem'st to lead the train,
Is this the temple of the Delphic god?

Ilys. It is; and on the middle point of earth
Its firm foundation by immortal hands
Stands fix'd:——But break we off; the folded gates
Unbar, and lo! the priestess' self appears!

[*The* Pythia *speaks as she descends from the Temple.*

Pyth. Hence, ye profane! nor with unhallow'd step
Polute the threshold of the Delian king,
Who slew the Python!—Say, from whence thou art,
And what thy business, stranger.

Phor. Sacred maid!
From Athens am I come, the harbinger
Of great Creusa, mine and Athens' queen.

Pyth. Comes she on pious purpose, to adore
The mystic shrine oracular?

Phor. She does;
And with her comes the partner of her bed,
Æolian Xuthus; he whose powerful arm
Sav'd Athens from her fate, and in return
From good Erectheus' bounteous hand receiv'd
His daughter and his crown. Would he had found
Some other recompence! [*Half aside.*

Pyth. [*Overhearing him.*] Would he had found!—
Old age is talkative, and I may learn
Somewhat of moment from him—Wherefore come they?
Does famine threaten, or wide-wasting plague
Infest the land?

Phor. Thank Heav'n, our crouded streets
Have felt no dire disease; and plenty still

Laughs in our blooming fields. Alas! I fear
The childless goddess who presides o'er Athens
Has found a surer method to declare
How ill she brooks that any stranger hand
Should wield th' Athenian sceptre.

Pyth. Does from her
The vengeance come?

Phor. I know not whence it comes;
But this I know, full fifteen years have roll'd
Since first their hands were join'd, and roll'd in vain;
For still the royal pair in silence mourn,
Curs'd with a barren bed. For this they come,
T' explore the latent cause, and beg of Heav'n
To grant an heir, or teach them where to fix,
On what selected head, the Athenian crown.

Pyth. And Heav'n, no doubt, will hear and grant their prayer.
Ilyssus, haste, and bid the priests prepare
For sacrifice. You, Nysa, and your sisters,
Amid the laurel grove with speed perform
The morning's due lustration.
Then hither all return.——Myself mean while
Will tempt the vice of age, and try to draw
Some useful secrets from him. [*Aside.*
The good king
Of whom you speak, Erectheus, did his people
Esteem and love him as they ought? for Fame
Talk'd largely of his worth. He was a king——

Phor. He was my good old master, such a king
As Heav'n but rarely sends. Did we esteem
And love him, dost thou ask? Oh! we ador'd him;
He was our father, not our king. These tears
At least may speak my heart. We must not hope
In these degenerate times to see him equall'd.

He never did an unkind act, but once,
And then he thought the public good requir'd it;
Though much I fear the evils we lament
From thence derive their origin.

Pyth. What act?
What unkind act?

Phor. O maid! 'twere long to tell
The whole unhappy story! yet in part
Hear what to me appears too closely join'd
With these our present ills. There was a youth,
Athenian born, but not of royal blood,
His name Nicander; him unlucky Fate
Had made the lover of our present queen,
While yet a maid. What will not love attempt
In young ambitious minds? He told his pain,
And won the fair in secret to admit,
And to return his passion. The good king
Was for a time deceiv'd, but found at last
Th' audacious fraud, and drove the guilty youth
To banishment perpetual. Some say
'Twas by his means he fell, though that my heart
Consents not to believe. Thus much is sure,
Nicander wander'd forth a wretched exile,
And ere few days had past, upon the road
Were found his well known garments stain'd with blood.
Sure sign of murder, and as sure a sign
No needy robber was the instrument.

Pyth. How bore Creusa this?

Phor. At first her sorrows
Were loud and frantic. Time at length subdued
Her rage to silent grief. The good old king,
To sooth her woes, consented she should raise
A tomb to her Nicander; and perform

A kind of annual rites to parted love.

Pyth. But that not long continued, for we find
She married Xuthus.

Phor. 'Twas a match of state;
He sav'd her country, and she gave her hand
Because that country ask'd it. But her heart
Is buried with Nicander. Still to him,
And Xuthus' self permits it, she performs
Her yearly off'rings, and adorns with flowers
An empty tomb.—Would he had liv'd and reign'd
Her wedded lord! we had not wanted then
Th' assistance of a stranger arm to guard
Th' Athenian state, nor had we then been driv'n
To search for heirs at Delphi.

Pyth. Stop thy tongue,
Or speak with rev'rence of the sacred shrine.
—Thy words were hasty, but thy silence now
Makes just atonement for them.—Then perhaps
Thou think'st this want of heirs a curse entail'd
By Heaven on Athens for Nicander's death
And Xuthus' reign?

Phor. I am Athenian born,
Nor love Æolian kings, however great
And good they may be.

Pyth. The imperial Xuthus
Is much renown'd.

Phor. Is virtuous, brave, and pious;
Perhaps too pious

Pyth. How!

Phor. Forgive me, maid,
I speak my thoughts with freedom.

Pyth. What thou speak'st
To me is sacred. Then perchance thou rank'st

His journey hither to address the god
Among those acts which thou would'st call too pious?

Phor. For me the gods of Athens would suffice,—
Yet do I pay just rev'rence, holy maid,
To thee, and to thy shrine.

Pyth. Thy zeal for Athens
Is too intemperate.—But the train returns
And interrupts our converse. Say, Ilyssus,
Are they prepar'd?

Enter ILYSSUS *and Virgins.*

Ilys. They are, and only wait
Th' approaching victims.

Pyth. By yon train, the Queen
Is now on her arrival. Thou, Ilyssus,
Receive her here; while I, as custom wills,
Deep in the temple's inmost gloom retire
And wait th' inspiring God.—Ilyssus, hear;
When thou hast paid due honours to the Queen,
Haste to Aletes, in the laurel grove
Impatient I expect him; tell him, youth,
Things of uncommon import do demand
His instant presence. But the croud approaches.
Stranger, farewel.——I feel, I feel within
An heav'n born impulse, and the seeds of truth
Are lab'ring in my breast.—Stranger, farewel.

[*The* Pythia *returns to the Temple, and the gates shut.*

Enter CREUSA *and Attendants.*

Creu. No farther need we conduct. Bid the guards
Return, and wait the King.

Phor. Does ought of moment
Detain him on the road?

Creu. He stops awhile
At great Trophonius' cave, that he may leave
No duty unperform'd. Heaven grant his zeal
May meet with just success!
Ilys. Please you, great Queen,
In yon pavilion to repose, and taste
Some light refection?
Creu. Ha!—Lycea—Phorbas,
What youth is this? There's something in his eyes,
His shape, his voice.—What may we call thee, youth?
Ilys. The servant of the god, who guards this fane.
Creu. Bear'st thou no name?
Ilys. Ilyssus, gracious Queen,
The priests and virgins call me.
Creu. Ha! Ilyssus!
That name's Athenian. Tell me, gentle youth,
Art thou of Athens then?
Ilys. I have no country,
Nor know I whence I am.
Creu. Who were thy parents?
Thy father, mother?
Ilys. Ever honour'd Queen,
I never knew a mother's tender cares,
Nor heard th' instructions of a father's tongue.
Creu. How cam'st thou hither?
Ilys. Eighteen years are past
Since in the temple's portal I was found
A sleeping infant.
Creu. Eighteen years! good Heaven!
That fatal time recalls a scene of woe—
Let me not think——Were there no marks to shew
From whom or whence thou wert?
Ilys. I have been told

An osier basket, such as shepherds weave,
And a few scatter'd leaves, were all the bed
And cradle I could boast.

Creu. Unhappy child!
But more, O ten times more unhappy they
Who lost, perhaps, in thee their only offspring!
What pangs, what anguish must the mother feel,
Compell'd, no doubt, by some disastrous fate——
—But this is all conjecture.—

Ilys. O great Queen,
Had those from whom I sprung been form'd like thee;
Had they e'er felt the secret pangs of nature,
They had not left me to the desert world
So totally expos'd. I rather fear
I am the child of lowliness and vice,
And happy only in my ignorance.
—Why should she weep? Or if her tears can fall
For even a stranger's but suspected woes,
How is that people blest where she presides
As mother and as queen!—Please you retire?

Creu. No, stay. Thy sentiments at least bespeak
A gen'rous education. Tell me, youth,
How has thy mind been form'd?

Ilys. In that, great Queen,
I never wanted parents. The good priests
And pious priestess, who with care sustain'd
My helpless infancy, left not my youth
Without instruction. But O, more than all,
The kindest, best good man, a neighb'ring sage,
Who has known better days, tho' now retir'd
To a small cottage on the mountain's brow,
He deals his blessings to the simple swains
In balms and powerful herbs. He taught me things

Which my soul treasures as its dearest wealth,
And will remember ever. The good priests,
'Tis true, had taught the same, but not with half
That force and energy; conviction's self
Dwelt on Aletes' tongue.

Creu. Aletes, said'st thou?
Was that the good man's name?

Ilys. It is, great Queen,
For yet he lives, and guides me by his counsels.

Creu. What did he teach thee?

Ilys. To adore high Heaven,
And venerate on earth Heaven's image, Truth:
To feel for others' woes, and bear my own
With manly resignation.—Yet I own
Some things he taught me which but ill agree
With my condition here.

Creu. What things were those?

Ilys. They were for exercise, and to confirm
My growing strength. And yet I often told him
The exercise he taught resembled much
What I had heard of war. He was himself
A warrior once.

Creu. And did those sports delight thee?

Ilys. Great Queen, I do confess my soul mix'd with them.
Whene'er I grasp'd the osier-platted shield,
Or sent the mimic javelin to its mark,
I felt I know not what of spirit in me.
But then I knew my duty, and repress'd
The swelling ardour. 'Tis to shades, I cried,
The servant of the temple must confine
His less ambitious, not less virtuous cares.

Creu. Did the good man observe, and blame thy ardour?

Ilys. He only smil'd at my too forward zeal;

Nay seem'd to think such sports were necessary
To soften what he call'd more rig'rous studies.

Creu. Suppose when I return to Athens, youth,
Thou should'st attend me thither!—Would'st thou trust
To me thy future fortunes?

Ilys. O most gladly!
—But then to leave these shades where I was nurs'd
The servant of the god, how might that seem?
And good Aletes too, the kind old man
Of whom I speak?—But wherefore talk I thus,
You only throw these tempting lures to try
Th' ambition of my youth.——Please you, retire?

Creu. Ilyssus, we will find a time to speak
More largely on the subject; for the present
Let all withdraw and leave us. Youth, farewel:
I see the place, and will retire at leisure.
Lycea, Phorbas, stay.

Ilys. [*Aside.*] How my heart beats!
She must mean something sure. Tho' good Aletes
Has told me polish'd courts abound in falsehood.
But I will bear the priestess' message to him,
And open all my doubts. [*Exit.*

Phor. Great Queen, why stand'st thou silent? Something
To labour in thy breast. [seems

Creu. Alas! good Phorbas,
Did'st thou observe that youth? When first my eye
Glanc'd on his beauteous form, methought I saw
The person of Nicander.

Phor. Gracious Queen,
Your heart misleads your eyes. The image there
Too deeply fix'd makes every pleasing object
Bear some resemblance to itself.

Creu. Lycea,

And yet, tho' thou wast there I well believe
Thy youth can scarce remember how he look'd,
When from the fight triumphant he return'd
Grac'd with the victor laurel; such a wreath
As now Ilyssus wears. Indeed, Lycea,
Thy mother, had she liv'd, had thought as I do.
Nay when he spoke the voice too was Nicander's.
I know not what to think, perhaps 'twas fancy,
Perhaps 'twas something more.

Phor. Illustrious Queen,
You do abuse your noble mind, and lend
To mere illusions of the brain the force
And power to make you wretched. Grant there were
Some slight resemblance of Nicander's form
In young Ilyssus, tho' my eyes perceive not
Even the most distant likeness; grant there were,
Yet wherefore should the sight so nearly touch thee,
Casual similitude? We know too well
Nicander left no heir. [*She seems disturbed.*
I say not this,
Great Queen, to heighten, but relieve your sorrows,
And banish from your breast each vain surmise
Which fancy might suggest.

Creu. Too well indeed,
O Phorbas, much too well indeed we know
Nicander left no heir to his perfections,
No image of himself.—And yet, good Phorbas,
Blame not my folly, nor demand a reason
If I entreat thee to examine strictly
The fortunes of this young unknown. The priests
Or priestess may know more than they entrust
To his unwary youth. The sage he spoke of,
Could'st thou not search him out; 'tis somewhere near

He dwells, I think, upon the mountain's brow.
Thou wonder'st at me; call it, if you please,
A woman's weakness; but obey me, Phorbas.
Phor. You say I wonder; 'tis indeed to see
My honour'd Queen employ her thoughts thus idly
On griefs long past; when things of dear concern
To her and Athens should alarm her nearly.
Creu. What things of dear concern?
Phor. See'st thou not, Queen,
Thy crown, Erectheus' crown, the crown of Athens,
Wav'ring in fortune's power?
Creu. The gods will fix it.
Phor. The gods! Ah, great Creusa, may my fears
Be vain and groundless! but I fear the gods
Have left us to ourselves. When we resign'd
Th' Athenian sceptre to a stranger hand
We did reject their guidance. Wherefore come we
To Delphi now, but that th' offended gods
Have turn'd too long an unnattentive ear
To our ill-judg'd petitions.
Creu. Why ill-judg'd?
We ask'd for heirs.
Phor. We did; for Xuthus' heirs,
The race of Æolus. I know, great Queen,
They were to spring from thee; but Heav'n permits not
The native pureness of th' Athenian soil
Should mix with foreign clay. I wish we find not
More alien kings at Delphi.
Creu. Think'st thou Xuthus
Deceives us then? His worth, his piety,
Forbid the thought. Besides, the sacred place
Admits not of deceit.
Phor. Credulity

Is not the vice of age. Forgive me, Queen,
If I suspect that piety which brings us
To search for kings at Delphi. Might not Athens
Have chosen her own monarch? Her brave youth,
Her bearded sages,—are they not the flower
And pride of Greece? Nay, might'st not thou, Creusa,
With liberal hand bestow the imperial wreath?
And who has better right?

Creu. The gods, who gave it
To me, and my great ancestors.

Phor. Whate'er
The gods bestow can never be resum'd,
Tho' we repent. The pious populace
Will rev'rence kings from heaven.

Creu. And wherefore not?

Phor. Oh, Queen! perhaps my fears are too officious;
But let thy servant beg——

Creu. I know thy zeal
For me and for thy country. Rest assur'd,
Creusa never will consent to aught
Which can endanger Athens.

Phor. My heart thanks thee!

Creu. Mean while the youth, Ilyssus——

Phor. Should the king,
Confirm'd by oracles, presume to fix
A stranger on the throne——

Creu. He will not do it.

Phor. I hope he will not; yet——

Creu. The youth I speak of,
Wilt thou enquire?——

Phor. Should Xuthus lay aside
His usual mildness, and assume at once
The monarch and the husband, could'st thou then——

Creu. In Athens' cause I could resist them all.
But cease these vain suspicions. A few hours
Will prove thy fears were groundless. Mean while, Phorbas,
Thou wilt find methods to inform thyself
Touching this unknown youth.
Phor. By yonder guards,
The king should be at hand.
Creu. I will retire
To the pavilion, and expect him there.
Yet hear me Phorbas; let not Xuthus know
Why thou enquir'st.
Phor. Xuthus has other cares.
Creu. The priestess too, I would confer with her:
Though that Lycea may perform. Farewel,
And prosper in thy task.—Alas, Lycea! [*Exit* Phorbas.
There is a secret labours in my breast,
But Fate forbids that I should give it utterance.
This boding heart was early taught to feel
Too sensibly; each distant doubt alarms it;
It starts at shadows——But retire we, maid.
Grief is the unhappy charter of our sex;
The gods, who gave us readier tears to shed,
Gave us more cause to shed them. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. Enter ALETES *and* ILYSSUS.

ALETES.

SEEM'D she disturb'd when she beheld thee?
Ilys. Much;
And when I gave her the slight hints I knew

Relating to my fortunes, she dissolv'd
In silent tears; such soft humanity
Sure never dwelt in any breast but her's.
Nor did I think till now that I had cause
Of discontent; but since she wept my fate,
I seem to find a reason in her grief,
And feel myself unhappy.

Alet. Why unhappy?

Ilys. I know not why: and yet to be confin'd
Thus to a single spot, to draw in air,
To take in nourishment, to live, to die,
For this was man design'd? Ah, good Aletes!
Sure thou hast taught me, godlike man was made
For nobler purposes of general good,
For action not for rest. The Queen propos'd
I should attend her to th' Athenian state;
Would'st thou advise it? Dost thou think, Aletes,
She meant I should attend her?

Alet. Doubtless, youth,
If she propos'd, she meant it.

Ilys. And would'st thou
Advise I should attend her?

Alet. Wherefore not?

Ilys. May I desert these shades? Or can I leave
Thee, thee, my good Aletes?

Alet. O, Ilyssus!
Strive not to hide thy heart; from me thou cans't not:
I form'd it, and I know it. Delphi's shades
Have now no peace for thee; thy bosom feels
Ambition's active, unrelenting fires.
Thou wishest and thou hop'st thou know'st not what.
'Tis glory thou would'st have. Go then, brave youth,
Where Virtue calls thee: be the means but noble,

Thou can'st not soar too high.
Ilys. My more than father!
Thy words inspire me, and I feel a warmth
Unknown before——But then, my birth——
Alet. Thy birth!
Did I not teach thee early to despise
A casual good? Thou art thyself, Ilyssus.
Inform me, youth, would'st thou be what thou art,
Thus fair, thus brave, thus sensibly alive
To glory's finest feel, or give up all,
To be descended from a line of Kings,
The tenth perhaps from Jove? I see thy cheek
Glows a repentant blush.—'Our greatest heroes,
"Those gods on earth, those friends of human kind,
"Whose great examples I would set before thee,
"Were once unknown like thee." And yet if birth
Concern thee, know, prophetic is my speech;
Thy fate is now at work, and a few hours
May shew thee what thou art.—My words alarm thee.
Ilys. They do, indeed. Oh, tell me!——
Alet. 'Tis in vain
Thou would'st enquire from me what Heav'n conceals
Till 'tis fit time. Didst thou not say, Ilyssus,
The Pythia would be here?
Ilys. She comes.
Alet. Retire,
And leave us to ourselves.
Ilys. I will—And yet,
Might I not know———
Alet. From me thou can'st know nothing.
Ilys. A few hours, said you?
Alet. Hence, and beg of Heav'n
To prosper the event. Retire, and leave us. [*Exit* Ilyssus.

Enter PYTHIA.

Pyth. Now, good Aletes, if thy pregnant mind,
Deep judging of events, has ever fram'd
Such artful truths as won believing man
To think them born of Heav'n, and made my name
Renown'd in Greece, Oh, now exert thy power!
No common cause demands it. Kings and State
Are our solicitors, and Athens' fate
Hangs on my lips.

Alet. I know it. And now,
If, as thou say'st, my secret kind advice,
And worn experience in the ways of men,
Have gain'd thy altars credit, and with gifts
Loaded thy shrines, now, by one grateful act
Thou may'st repay me all.

Pyth. What act? Oh, speak!
And gladly I obey.

Alet. Ah act, my Pythia,
Which, though at first it may seem bold and dangerous,
Shall in the end add lustre to thy shades,
And make ev'n Kings protectors of thy fane.
Oh, Pythia! 'twas the hand of Heav'n itself
Which brought these royal suppliants to thy shrine.
I could unfold a tale—but let it rest.
Thou shalt ere night know all, and bless with me
Th' indulgent Powers above. Only in this
Obey me blindly, Pythia.

Pyth. Say, in what?

Alet. Declare Ilyssus heir to Athens' crown.

Pyth. Ilyssus heir! What mean'st thou? 'Tis a fraud
Too palpable.

Alet. I knew 'twould startle thee.

But 'tis because thou know'st the fraud, my Pythia,
That it alarms thee. Didst thou really think
This youth were heir to the Athenian crown,
Would'st thou not seize the happy gift of chance,
And to the world proclaim it?

Pyth. True, I should;
And bless my fate that in these sacred shades
I had nurs'd up unknowingly a King
For my protector. But what then might seem
The consequence, now seems the cause, Aletes:
Will they not say I made the King, to gain
The kind protector?

Alet. So to thee it seems;
But who will say it? The believing many
Will bow with rev'rence and implicit faith
To what thy shrine ordains; and for the few
Who may suspect the cheat, true policy
Will keep them silent. Should they dare detect
A fraud like this, and spurn at right divine,
Where were their pow'r? The many headed beast
Would feel the slacken'd rein, and from his back
Shake off the lordly rider. "Nay, should Athens
"Be blind to her own good, the states of Greece,
"Thou know'st it well, would arm in thy defence,
"And force her to receive the king thou gav'st her.
"His form, his unknown birth, his winning softness,
"His education here in Heaven's own eye,
"All plead in his behalf. And, as he tells me,
"The Queen already with unusual marks
"Of favour has beheld him. For the King,
"A pious awe and rev'rence for the Gods
"Is his distinguish'd attribute." Thou seem'st
To weigh my words. To clear thy doubts at once,

Know, many days are past since first I knew
Of their approach. Thou think'st I should have told thee.
It needed not. I have myself prepar'd
Each previous circumstance, and found due means
To forward the event. Thy part is easy;
Behold the oracle. [woe.'

Pyth. [*Reads.*] 'A banish'd youth is Athens' cause of
How know'st thou that? [*Looking earnestly at him.*

Alet. Demand not, but read on.

Pyth. [*Reads.*] 'For that youth banish'd Athens must
Another youth; and on the young unknown, [receive
Who 'tends my shrine, and whom I call my son,
Bestow th' imperial wreath. The God declares
No more.'

Alet. Thou seem'st amaz'd.

Pyth. I am indeed,
To find thee thus instructed on a theme
I came prepar'd to mention. The Queen's passion,
Her lover banish'd——

Alet. What thou sees't I know
May tell thee I know more. "But say from whence
"Thou gain'dst thy intelligence.

"*Pyth.* From one
"Whose zeal may thwart thy schemes; a warm old man,
"And firm in Athens' cause, who came to-day
"Before the rest, and, led by my enquiries,
"Gave me those hints on which I thought to build
"Prophetic, doubtful answers. But I find
"My best instructor here.

"*Alet.* Perhaps thou dost.
"Of this rest well assured, I ne'er had ask'd
"Of Pythia ought but what I knew with safety
"She might comply with."

Pyth. Tell me what thou know'st.

Alet. Not yet; 'tis better thou remain in ignorance
Till all be finish'd. But pronounce the oracle,
And leave the rest to me. Dost thou distrust me?

Pyth. I do not. Yet if on slight hints alone
Thou form'st this weighty fraud, consider well
What may or may not follow. By thy looks,
There should be something hid. "Thy coming hither
"Was much upon the time we found this child;
"And since, with what almost paternal care
"Thou hast instructed him. Tho' that indeed
"Might spring from thy benevolence of heart,
"Which I have known is boundless." Say, Aletes,
What should I think? Thou smil'st.

Alet. Wilt thou obey me?

Pyth. I will: "and yet if 'tis a fraud, Aletes,
"The warm old man of whom I spoke detests
"A stranger king. Ev'n Xuthus' self, whose worth
"He doth acknowledge great, he views with pain
"Upon th' Athenian throne.

"*Alet.* I know him well;
"'Tis Phorbas. Do not wonder at my words,
"But find a means that I may see the Queen
"In secret, unobserv'd by prying eyes,
"And all that old man's fears and rage shall vanish.
"He shall with joy receive a stranger king.
"Wilt thou devise the means?

"*Pyth.*" I now begin
To hope indeed, there is some secret hid
Of most important weight. But does the Queen——

Alet. I will not answer thee; my time's too precious,
Only devise some means that I may see her
Quite unobserv'd by all.

Pyth. You cannot see her
Till all be past. Will that suffice?
Alet. It will.
Pyth. Here in the laurel grove.
Alet. No place more fit.
But, Oh, be careful, Pythia, that the King
Observe us not! for 'tis of mighty moment
He should believe this substituted youth
Of race Æolian. To which end, my Pythia,
I have among the priests these few days past,
When they suspected not th' approach of Xuthus,
Dropp'd doubtful hints as if I had discover'd
Some antique marks amid the osier twigs
Which form'd Ilyssus' cradle, that denote
He sprang from Æolus. And at the cave
Of great Trophonius have I ta'en due care
Such answers should be given as would induce
One of less faith than Xuthus to expect
An heir of his own family.
Pyth. The boy,
Knows he of thy intentions?
Alet. No, nor must
Till ripening time permit. His fate depends
Upon his ignorance. Soft, who comes here?
Pyth. It is the warm old man, and, as I think,
Some fair attendant of the Queen. Retire.
I would know more, but——wherefore dost thou gaze
So ardently upon them?
Alet. Hence, away!
We must not now be seen. [*Exeunt.*

Enter LYCEA *and* PHORBAS.

Lyc. This place seems quite retir'd. Here if thou wait,
I will inform the Queen, and her impatience

Will bring her on the instant. Surely, Phorbas,
Something mysterious lurks beneath her tears,
Her strange anxieties. Since thou wert absent
This unknown youth alone has fill'd her thoughts;
Of him alone she talks, recounts his words,
Describes his looks, his gestures, loves to dwell
On each particular. Ere thou wert gone
She wish'd and even expected thy return;
Dispatch'd me often, tho' she knew 'twas vain,
To watch for thy arrival. When the King
Approach'd, she smooth'd her brow, as if to hide
The strugglings of her mind; nay, seem'd afraid
He should suspect her sorrows.

Phor. Then to him
She mention'd not this youth?

Lyc. Her conduct there
Was most mysterious. With a voice of fear,
She slightly dropp'd that she had seen a youth
Whom she could wish to bear with her to Athens.
The King consented, and with smiles propos'd
They should adopt him.

Phor. Ha! adopt him, saidst thou?

Lyc. In short, he spoke, but at his words a glow
Of sudden joy spread o'er her face, her tongue
Forgot restraint, and in his praise grew lavish;
Then stopp'd again, and, hesitating, strove
To check its zeal, as fearful to betray
Some hidden transport.

Phor. Whatsoe'er it be,
I soon shall damp her joy. This youth, Lycea,
Must not to Athens—But behold, the Queen.

Lyc. Oh, how impatient! ere I could return
To tell her thou wert here, she comes herself,
Eager to learn thy tidings.

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. Now, my Phorbas,
Say what thou know'st at once. The King already
Consents he should attend us.

Phor. Never, never
Shall Athens see that youth!

Creu. What mean'st thou, Phorbas?

Phor. Too much already of Æolian blood
Has hapless Athens known.

Creu. Æolian blood!

Phor. The King consents! I doubt not his consent—
Yes, 'twas my word, great Queen—Æolian blood;
This youth descends from Æolus.

Creu. Be dumb,
Or bring me better tidings.

Phor. Worse I cannot;
But what I speak is truth.

Creu. Peace, monster, peace!
Thou know'st not truth. 'Tis thy affected zeal
For Athens, for thy country, that suggests
This horrid falsehood; 'tis thy hate of Xuthus.

Phor. What means my Queen? Or how have I deserv'd
Such harsh expressions? Does my honest love
For Athens and Creusa subject me
To such unkind suspicions?

Creu. Gracious Gods!
It cannot be.—Alas, forgive me, Phorbas!
I know not what I say; thy words strike through me,
They pierce my very soul. Oh, I had hop'd!——
But tell me all; tho' I believe thee honest,
Thy zeal for Athens, and for me, may make thee
Too hasty of belief. Why art thou silent?

Phor. Amazement stops my tongue; these starts of passion,
This violence of grief, must have a cause.
Creu. Perhaps they have; perhaps to thee, good Phorbas,
This bursting heart may open all its sorrows.
But tell me first, what are thy proofs? From whence
Gain'dst thou this curs'd intelligence?
Phor. O Queen!
Thy looks, thy words—I know not how to answer.
Yet if there be offence in what I speak,
My ignorance offends, not I offend.
Know then, Creusa, from the priests who 'tend
This Delphic shrine, by your command I learnt
My first intelligence.
Creu. And did they say
This youth was of Æolian race?
Phor. They did:
At least their words imported little less.
They judg'd me Xuthus' friend, not enemy,
As would thy rage suggest, and as a friend,
Dropp'd hints they thought would please me.
Creu. Then, perhaps,
It was not truth they spoke; they but deceiv'd
Thy ear with well-judg'd flattery.
Phor. What follow'd
Confirm'd it truth. Has the King mention'd to thee
What promises were given him at the shrine
Of sage Trophonius?
Creu. General promises
Of sure success—no more.
Phor. Know then, great Queen,
As I return'd from converse with the priests,
I met his friend and bosom favourite, Lycon.
Joy sparkled in his eyes, and his vain tongue

O'erflow'd with transport. I observ'd it well,
And gave the torrent passage; nay, with art,
Ev'n led it blindly forward; till at length
He open'd his whole soul, and, under seal
Of firmest secrecy, told me the King
Would find an heir at Delphi, such an heir
As would rejoice the unapparent shades
Of his great ancestors. At that I started.
He found his error then, and told me, glozing,
That great Trophonius had almost proclaim'd,
Tho' not expressly, Xuthus here should find
An heir of his own race.

Creu. Of his own race!

Phor. So said he. Whether great Trophonius spoke
This oracle, I know not; but I know
Too well whose oracle to me declar'd it.

Creu. Think'st thou this youth——

Phor. Grant it were only done
To try my zeal, why should they try it now,
Unless some close design requir'd that trial?
Yes, mighty Queen, I do believe this youth
Is our intended king. But, by yon heaven,
If it be he, or any other he
Of Xuthus' race, he shall not reign in Athens.
This poniard first shall drink his blood.

Creu. Forbear!
That thought distracts me—tho' perhaps 'tis just.—
Oh, Phorbas! 'twas my hope, my wish, my prayer,
That youth might reign in Athens. But thy words
Strike deadly damps, like baleful aconite,
And poison all within.

Phor. What means my Queen?

Creu. Oh, Phorbas! Oh, Lycea!—But first swear

By Nemesis, and the tremendous Powers
Who punish broken faith, no word, no hint
Shall 'scape your lips of all your Queen declares.
Both. We swear.
Creu. Know then, Oh! pain to memory!
I had a son.
Phor. A son!
Lyc. Good Heaven!
Phor. A son!
Creu. Oh, my full heart!—Thy mother, my Lycea,
Knew all the fatal process of my woes,
And was their only solace. Phorbas, yes,
I had a son; but witness every God
Whose genial power presides o'er nuptial leagues,
Nicander was my wedded lord. That night,
That fatal night, which drove him forth from Athens,
Forc'd from my swelling womb, ere yet mature,
Its precious burthen. To thy mother's cares
I ow'd my life. In secret she assuag'd
My piercing pangs, and to Nicander's arms
In secret she convey'd the wretched infant.
What follow'd well thou know'st. Nicander fell,
And with him doubtless fell the dear, dear charge
Consign'd to his protection! Yet, good Phorbas,
When I beheld this youth, his looks, his voice,
His age, his unknown birth, all, all conspir'd
To cheat me into hopes. Alas, how fallen!
How blasted all!
Phor. Great Queen, my tears confess,
An old man's tears, which rarely fall, confess
How much I share your anguish. Had I known
Nicander was your lord, by earth and heaven,
I would have rais'd all Athens in his cause;

Nay, been a rebel to the best of masters,
Ere the dear pledge of your unspotted loves
Should thus have fall'n untimely. Now, alas!
I have not ev'n one flatt'ring hope to give thee.
Till now I oft have wonder'd why so far
Their rage pursu'd Nicander. 'Tis too plain
They knew the precious burden which he bore,
And for the hapless child the father died.

Creu. Oh, Gods! I feel the truth of what thou utter'st,
And my heart dies within me. Oh, Lycea!
Who, who would be a mother?

Phor. Be a Queen,
And turn thy grief to rage. Shall aliens sport
With thy misfortunes? Shall insulting spoilers
Smile o'er the ruins of thy hapless state,
While all the golden harvest is their own?
Shall Xuthus triumph? Shall his race succeed,
While thine (I mean not to provoke thy tears)
Thy tender blossoms, are torn rudely off,
Almost or ere they bloom?

Creu. It shall not be;
No, ye immortal Pow'rs!——Yet let us wait
Till the dire truth glare on us. One short hour,
And doubt shall be no more. Then, Phorbas, then,
Should he presume to place on Athens' throne
His alien race, nay, tho' this beauteous youth,
This dear resemblance of my murder'd lord,
Should be the fatal choice, by that dear shade,
Which perish'd as it reach'd the gates of life,
I will—I think I will—assist thy vengeance——
Soft! who comes here?—'Tis he! how innocent,
How winning soft he looks! Whate'er it be,
He knows not the deceit. Look on him, Phorbas;

Nay, thou shalt question him.

Phor. Not I. Great Queen,
Resume yourself, nor let this fond persuasion
Betray you to a weakness you should blush at.

Creu. If possible, I will.

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. Illustrious Queen,
The altar stands prepar'd, and all things wait
Your royal presence. From the King I come
His messenger.

Creu. We will attend his pleasure.
Be near me, Phorbas; I may want thy counsel.

Ilys. She looks not on me sure as she was wont.
I'll speak to her. [*Aside.*] Permit me, gracious Queen,
To pay my humblest thanks; for, by your means,
The King is kind as you are.

Creu. Rise, Ilyssus.
Perhaps you needed there no advocate.
Phorbas, lead on. My resolution melts,
And all my sex returns. One look from him
Outweighs a thousand proofs. Phorbas, lead on,
Or I am lost in weakness. [*Exeunt* Creusa *and* Phorbas.

Ilys. [*Stopping* Lycea.] Gentle maid,
Stay yet a moment. Wherefore does the Queen
Look coldly on me? Know'st thou if in ought
I have offended?

Lyc. Things of mightiest import
At present fill her mind, nor leave they room
For less affairs. My duty calls me hence. [*Exit.*

Ilys. I hope it is no more; yet each appearance
Alarms me now. Aletes, thou hast rais'd
Such conflicts here, such hopes, such fears, such doubts,

That apprehension sinks beneath their weight.
Well might'st thou say these solitary shades
Have now no peace for me. Yet once thou taught'st me,
That the pure mind was its own source of peace.
But that philosophy, I find, belongs
To private life; for where ambition enters
I feel it is not true. [*Exit.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Vestibule of the Temple. Enter ALETES.

Aletes.

WHY should I doubt? It will, it must succeed.
Yet I could wish that I had seen Creusa
Before 'twas undertaken; for perhaps——
'Tis better as it is. Her part had then
Been difficult to act; now what she does,
Assisting or opposing the design,
Will all seem natural—The Pythia sure
Will act as I directed——Hark! the rites
Should be ere this perform'd. Why stay they then?
That noise proclaims them finish'd, and the crowd
Will soon be here.——They come; I must not yet
Be seen; the Pythia in the laurel grove
May tell me what has pass'd. [*Exit.*

CREUSA *descends hastily from the Temple in great disorder,* LYCEA *following.*

Lyc. Stay, mighty Queen;
You know not what you do; your rage transports you;
You leave the rites unfinish'd, and the crowd
In wild amazement gaze on your departure.

Creu. I will not stay; nor will I tamely bear
My disappointed hopes. Oh, honest Phorbas!
Oh, good old man! thy penetrating mind
Saw early their designs. 'Tis to supply
Nicander's loss (Oh, ne'er to be supply'd!)
That we must call in strangers to the throne,
And yield our sceptres to Æolian hands.
Yes, ye great shades of my progenitors,
I hear ye call; ye shall, ye shall have vengeance!

Lyc. Whatever you design, conceal at least
This transport of your rage.

Creu. Why loiters Phorbas?
He saw my anguish; wherefore comes he not
To its relief? They fool me past endurance.
Rely they on the weakness of my sex?
Lycea, they shall find this feeble arm
In such a cause can lay the distaff by,
And grasp the unerring thunderbolt of Jove.
Oh, Phorbas, art thou come?

Enter PHORBAS *from the Temple.*

Phor. Now, mighty Queen,
Are my suspicions just? Is Phorbas honest?

Creu. As light as truth itself. My counsellor,
My bosom friend!

Phor. Now shall a casual likeness,
If such there be, a semblant cast of features,
The sport of nature in a human form—
Shall trifles light as these weigh down conviction?
Oh, Queen! from first to last th' apparent scheme
Glares on us now. Why were we brought to Delphi,
But that this youth has long been nurtur'd here
In secret from the world; perhaps the son

Of Xuthus' self, plac'd here at first, to hide
The guilt and shame of some dishonest mother,
Though now applied to more pernicious ends.
Creu. It may be so.
Phor. And why, say why, to-day,
While Xuthus stays behind for oracles
He wanted not, is young Ilyssus bid
To meet your eyes, and win with artful tales
Your easy heart?
Creu. Bid! was he bid to do it?
Phor. I saw the priestess whisper something to him,
Then loud she bid him wait for thy approach.
She must, forsooth, retire to sacred glooms,
And wait for inspiration. Xuthus' gold
Was what inspir'd the traitress. Yet, good Heav'n,
When from the shrine she gave the fraudful words,
With what strange art the holy hypocrite
In mimic trances died!—'A banish'd youth
Is Athens' cause of woe.' Too truly said,
Though for a wicked purpose, to allure
Thy easy faith, and lead thee to admit
The fraud which follow'd.
Creu. Never, never, Phorbas,
Will I that fraud admit! How readily
Did Xuthus, when my foolish fondness ask'd it,
Consent to my request! Thou heard'st him say [*To* Lycon.
We should adopt this youth; in seeming sport
He spoke it; but ev'n then th' insulting tyrant
Couch'd fatal truths beneath th' ambiguous phrase.
Phor. Why should a youth design'd for solitude
Be taught the arts of war? He saw himself
The impropriety. Who is this sage
That has instructed him? And why should Lycon

O'erflow with sudden joy, but that he found,
From thy apparent fondness for the boy,
Their schemes grew practicable. Nay, to-day,
When to the priestess' self my honest love
For Athens, and dislike of stranger Kings,
Burst freely forth, she chid my hasty zeal,
Commended Xuthus, talk'd of piety
And reverence to the Gods: 'twas to their priests
She meant, their meddling priests, who dare presume
To sport with thrones, to sell their Gods for gold,
And stamp rank falsehoods with the seal of Heav'n.

Lycea. Forbear, you are too loud so near the temple;
Xuthus himself will hear.

Creu. We would be heard.
Instruct me, Phorbas, by what means to crush
This impious combination.

Phor. Athens yet
Has honest hearts. Yes, Phorbas yet has friends
Who dare be patriots, and prefer their country
To Xuthus' kindest smile. Some such are here,
Ev'n now at Delphi. But, illustrious Queen,
We must with caution act. The name of Heav'n,
Howe'er usurp'd, adds vigour to their cause,
And weakens ours. We might in secret find
A sure revenge.

Creu. What?

Phor. Death.

Creu. Of Xuthus?

Phor. His
Might follow; but the more immediate cause
Should earliest be remov'd—the boy.

Creu. The boy!
Why should he die? Believe me, honest Phorbas,

He knows not of the fraud. His every look
Proclaims his innocence. If impious men
Make him their instrument of evil deeds,
Can he be blam'd? Bred up in shades, poor youth,
He never knew the arts of base mankind,
Nor should he share their punishment.

Phor. O Queen,
They have too well succeeded! This fond passion,
Which their insidious cunning first inspir'd,
Clings close about your heart, and may at last
Undo us all.——But hark! that noise declares
The finish'd rites. Retire we to the grove,
And there will I enforce——

Creu. No, let us stay.
I will confront this artful politician,
And shew him I am yet a Queen.

Phor. Perhaps
'Twere better to retire till our full scheme
Were ripe for vengeance.—Yet if we remain,
High words must rise, which will alarm her pride
And fit her for my purpose. [*Aside.*

Enter XUTHUS, ILYSSUS, *Priests, Virgins, Guards, &c. from the Temple.*

Xuth. [*Coming up to* Creusa.] Thy looks, Creusa, thy abrupt departure,
Affronting to the God himself, and these
His sacred ministers, too plainly shew
Irreverent rage, resisting Heaven's high will:
Nor dost thou want, I see, unthinking woman,
Inflamers of thy folly.—But of this
Enough; behold the youth whom Heaven designs
Thy heir and mine.

Creu. My heir!

Xuth. Thy heir, Creusa.
What means that haughty look? Why with contempt
Dost thou behold him? Is he chang'd, Creusa?
Have a few hours so totally transform'd him?
Is all that winning grace of which thou spak'st
Almost with rapture, is that native charm
Of innocence all vanish'd? Hear him speak,
Hear if he talks less sensibly than when
Thy pleas'd attention hung upon his words,
And lent each syllable an added grace.
What hast thou found, or thy grave monitor,
What has he found, which can so suddenly
Have wrought this wondrous change? Is it because
The Gods have thought with thee that he deserves
A crown? Or is it that my will consents?
And therefore thine, proud Queen, perversely strives
To combat thy affections?

Creu. We, methinks,
Have chang'd affections. The calm, steady Xuthus,
Whose equal mind ne'er knew the stormy gusts
Of discomposing passion, now can feel
Indecent warmth, when touch'd by pious zeal.
Nay he, to whom the tend'rer sentiments
Seem'd but the weakness of the human frame,
Now wakes inspir'd with some unusual softness.
Have oracles the power to raise at once
The kind affections? Or did he conceal
The smother'd flame, 'till, authoris'd by Heaven,
It might burst out unquestion'd?

Xuth. Haughty Queen,
I understand thee well; thou think'st this youth
A substitute of mine, and dar'st affront

Yon awful shrine, the fountain of pure truth.
But by that God who bears the vengeful bow,
And whose large eye—Yet wherefore should I strive
By oaths to undeceive thee?—breasts like mine
Can scorn th' imputed falsehood they detest.
Nor am I now to learn from what vile source
Thy vain suspicions rise. But know, proud Queen,
This youth shall reign in Athens; and yet more,
To punish thy vain pride, since thou provok'st it,
I do believe him of Æolian race.

Creu. Thou dost?

Xuth. I do. A race as glorious, Queen,
As Crecrops' boasted lineage. For the youth,
Were I to beg the choicest boon of Heaven
From my own loins to rise, I could not hope
A nobler offspring.

Phor. Hear'st thou that? [*Aside to* Creusa.

Creu. I do,
And will revenge the insult.

Ilys. [*Kneeling.*] Gracious Queen!
What have I done which should estrange thee to me?
Am I the unhappy cause of these dissentions?

Creu. Kneel not to me, Ilyssus.

Xuth. Kneel not to her;
'Tis I am thy protector, and thy friend,
Nay, now thy father.

Ilys. Yet, Oh, mighty King,
Permit me at her royal feet to pay
My humblest duty! If I call thee father,
She sure must be a mother. [*She turns away disordered.*

Xuth. Rise, Ilyssus,
Thou seest she stands unmov'd.

Ilys. No, now she softens,
I see it in her eyes.

Creu. I will, I will
Be mistress of my soul. Why kneel'st thou, youth?
I blame not thee.
Xuth. Me then thou blamest, Creusa.
I am the object of thy rage. 'Tis Xuthus
Thou think'st unworthy of th' Athenian throne.
Creu. Athens might well have spar'd a foreign lustre,
Secure of fame, had Xuthus ne'er been born.
Xuth. Ungrateful Queen! had Xuthus ne'er been born
What now had Athens been?
Creu. Perhaps in ruins.
And better so than to become the prey
Of needy wand'ring strangers.
Xuth. Earth and Heaven!
This the return?—I knew thou never lov'dst me:
Yet, witness Heav'n, I ravish'd not thy hand,
Thou gav'st it sullenly, but yet thou gav'st it;
And I well hop'd thy female sense of honour,
Of duty to thy lord, might have secur'd
At least my future peace. Thy tend'rer thoughts,
The wife's best ornament, I knew were buried
In a plebeian grave.
Creu. Plebeian grave!
Xuth. Fool that I was, I flatter'd thy vain sorrows,
Indulg'd their weak excess, and rais'd, I find,
Imaginary rivals in the tomb!
But never more, Creusa, never more
Shalt thou affront my ill-requited fondness.
I will destroy that pageant of thy passion,
Tear from that idle shrine th' insulting wreaths,
And cancel thy mock worship.
Ilys. Gracious Queen,
Retire a while.
Creu. Begone.—Insulting tyrant,

Touch but a wreath that's sacred to Nicander,
And, by pale Hecate's awful rites, I swear
Thy life shall pay the forfeit; nay, the lives
Of thy whole dastard race.—Plebeian grave!
Had that Plebeian liv'd, imperial Xuthus
Had crouch'd beneath his feet.

Xuth. Oh, would to Heaven
This scepter'd arm could raise him from the earth,
That thou might'st see how infamous a slave
Thout dar'st prefer to Xuthus!——Come, Ilyssus,
We leave her to her follies. Look not on her,
She merits not thy tenderness. Away!
If reason should again resume its seat,
We may expect her at the banquet. Come,
All here must be our guests. [*Exeunt* Xuthus, Ilyssus, *&c.*

Phor. Curb not thy passion, give it vent, great Queen,
And let it burst in thunder on thy foes.

Creu. It shall, by Heaven, it shall!—I thought till now
My griefs were sacred; but this monster dares
Insult even misery itself. Oh, Phorbas,
Forgive me, if my tears will force a passage!
Now, they are gone, and I will weep no more.
Come, faithful counsellor of vengeance, come,
Instruct me how to act, steel all my soul;
Let not Remorse, or Pity's coward voice,
The bane of noble deeds, intrude to cross us.
Nicander's injur'd ghost shall aid our counsels.
Say, shall he die?

Phor. Not yet, first be his schemes
Abortive all, his politic designs,
Then let him die despis'd.

Creu. Agreed; but how?

Phor. Now at the banquet may we crush at once

His full blown hopes. The fatal cause remov'd,
Th' effect of course must cease.
Creu. What cause?
Phor. The boy.——
I see thou shudder'st at it; " but, great Queen,
" Hear but the cogent reasons I shall offer,
" And thou wilt think as I do." For the boy,
Heav'n knows, I wish to spare him, but no means
No earthly means but this can curse completely
This politic designer. " Doubtless, long
" This fav'rite scheme, to place on Athens' throne
" His hated race, has labour'd in his breast,
" And all his hours employ'd. On this alone
" He builds the firm foundation of his peace,
" His happiness to come. His death were nothing,
" He knows his friends, the minions of his fortune,
" He knows all Greece, such is their dread and awe
" Of Delphi's shrine, will join in the support
" Of this deceitful claim; and that firm hope
" Will make him triumph ev'n in death, and laugh
" At our too shallow vengeance.
" *Creu.* Laugh he shall not.
" No, I will punish home."
Phor. " You cannot punish
By any means but his. And" know, great Queen,
I have a poison of such subtle force,
(Why dost thou start?) of such amazing strength,
Yet so peculiar in its operation,
That it shall seem the surfeit of the feast,
Not we have done the deed. At least shall seem so
To all but Xuthus' self; for he, methinks,
Should know the truth, at least suspect it strongly,
And yet not dare revenge.

Creu. I cannot bear it;
Howe'er we fail in our revenge, my Phorbas,
The boy must live.

Phor. Good Heav'n! Is this Creusa?
Is this the vengeful Queen who would not hear
Remorse or Pity's voice?—Farewel then, Athens!
Yes, my poor country, thou must sink enslav'd
To foreign tyrants! She who should defend
Thy rights, thy liberties, stands tamely by,
And sees the yoke impos'd, nay, smiles to see it:
Thy Queen, the last of her illustrious line,
Consents to thy destruction.

Creu. Never, Phorbas.
Do what thou wilt. With this last parting pang
I give him to thy rage.—Yet, Oh, beware
I see him not again! One look from him
Would baffle all thy schemes.

Phor. Now at the banquet
Will we infuse the draught, ev'n in the cup
Which the King's self presents to his young heir
In token of election.

Creu. Stay, good Phorbas.

Phor. Already have I for the just design
Suborn'd a faithful slave. Nay, should it fail,
I have a trusty band, a chosen few,
Athenian souls, who scorn to bow the knee
To any foreign lord; these will I place
At the pavilion doors, if need require,
To second our attempt.

Creu. Yet stay, good Phorbas,
How kindly did he seem to sympathize
With my distress! Nay, almost chid the King,
When his loud rage——

Phor. He had been taught his lesson.
'Twas all design, all artifice to work
Upon a woman's weakness.

Creu. Think'st thou so?

Phor. I do. But, Oh, my Queen, be more than woman!
Conquer this foible of thy sex.

Creu. Heav'n knows
How much it costs to do it! Go then, Phorbas—
I cannot bid thee prosper. [*Exit* Phorbas.
Oh, Lycea,
Thou know'st not what I feel!—Haste, call him back!
No, stay——I think the bitterness is past,
And I can bear it now. Lend me thy arm;
I would retire, Lycea.——Yet from what
Should I retire? I cannot from myself!——
Oh, boy! thou art reveng'd; whate'er thou suffer'st
Is light, to what thy murd'ress feels! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. PHORBAS *and* Athenians.

Phorbas.

THIS way, my friends; at the pavilion doors
Stand ready arm'd, that if we need your aid,
You may observe the sign, and crush at once
These vile usurpers on the rights of Athens.
I hope we want you not. I must be hid
A while, lest Xuthus should suspect my presence.
The Queen too may repent, I'll therefore shun her
Till the deed's done, irrevocably done. [*Aside.*
—But stir not till I come—What noise is that?
Retire, my friends, the temple's postern door
Grates on its hinge.—Be secret, and we prosper. [*Ex. severally.*

Enter ALETES *and* PYTHIA.

Alet. This quarrel was unlucky. A slight breach
Had lent my purpose strength; but wrought thus high
It may defeat our hopes. She cannot now
With ease recede from her too rash resolves,
At least not unsuspected. Did she, say'st thou,
Reject thy message?

Pyth. Scarcely did she pay
The decent dues my sacred office claims.
And when I prest her more, with sullen pride
She silently withdrew.

Alet. See her I must.
Where went she?

Pyth. To the shades which over-hang
Th' Aonian fount.

Alet. I will pursue her thither.

Pyth. It may not be, for now I know thy secret.
'Tis my turn to be prudent. Know'st thou not
Thou should'st be cautious, nor expose thyself
To prying eyes? I heard her, as she pass'd,
In broken whispers bid Lycea haste
To Phorbas, and inform that trusty friend
That she would wait him in the laurel grove.
Here then thou may'st surprise them both, and crown
At once thy whole design.

Alet. Thou counsel'st well,
And I will guide me by thy kind advice.
" Oh, Pythia! how did every thing conspire
" To give me hopes that I should place the boy
" Secure on Athens' throne, unknown to all
" But those whom Fate had made his firmest friends!
" The very means I us'd to make it sure,

" Have been most adverse to the cause I labour'd.
" Had I relied on Xuthus' piety,
" Nor mention'd Æolus, success were mine;
" And let me hope it still." What most I fear
Is the Queen's warmth of passion. To which end
I must proceed with tenderness, and hide,
For some short time, Ilyssus from her knowledge.
I have unnumber'd cautions to pemise,
Which her o'erflowing joy may haply ruin.
The banquet, is it ready?

Pyth. It has long
In vain expected its illustrious guests.
The King already has forgot his rage,
And hopes returning thought may move the Queen
To equal amity: he therefore finds
Continual causes to delay the feast.

Alet. Retire. Perhaps 'tis she; I hear the steps
Of some who move this way. [*Exit* Pythia.
What means he here?
Why art thou absent from the banquet, youth?

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. It has no joys for me. I fear, Aletes,
Thou and thy Pythia have most foully play'd
For my advancement.

Alet. Ha!

Ilys. Where are the parents
Whom thou did'st promise to my hopes? Alas!
I find no parents here, no kind regards,
No inexpressive fondness. Stern debate
And foul dissention kindle here their torch
To usher in my greatness. Ev'n Creusa,
Whose tenderness, I know not how, alarm'd

My throbbing heart with hopes, and doubts, and fears,
Unfelt before—ev'n she has taught her eyes
To look with strangeness on me. The good King,
Who yet withdraws not his protection from me,
Seems lost in anxious thought. Unkind Aletes,
Art thou the cause of this? Say, am I sprung
Of race Æolian? For by Heaven I swear,
By that pure fountain of immortal truth,
I will not brook deceit. I will again,
Howe'er the glitt'ring mischief tempt my youth,
Become that humble unknown thing I was,
Rather than wear a crown by falsehood gain'd.
" Speak then, and give me ease."

Alet. My dearest boy———
His virtue charms me, though it may prevent
His own success. Oh, happy, happy Athens!
To gain a King like him, whose honest soul
Starts at imagin'd fraud! [*Aside.*

Ilys. Speak on, Aletes,
And do not by that look of tenderness,
And murm'ring to thyself, alarm me more.

Alet. What should I speak? This very morn, Ilyssus,
This very morn I told thee a few hours
Would shew thee what thou wert; but thy impatience
Brooks not that short delay. It seems Aletes
Has lost his usual credit with Ilyssus,
Ev'n with the youth his anxious care has form'd.
Think'st thou, the man who taught thy feeling heart
To start at falsehood, would himself commit
The fraud thou shudder'st at? What have I done,
Which should induce thee to a thought so base?
Did e'er my precepts contradict my heart?
Did I e'er teach a virtue I not practis'd?

—I see thou art confounded. Know then, youth,
I blame not thy impatience, nay, I praise
That modesty which can so soon resume
Its seat, when all things round are big with wonder.
Ere night thou shalt know all; till then, Ilyssus,
Behave as Athens' King.

Ilys. Oh, good Aletes,
Forgive my rashness! Yes, I know thee honest
As truth itself, and know the wondrous debt
I owe thy goodness. Yet, if thou confess
That I have reason for these anxious cares,
Thou wilt permit me still to question thee.
Nay, look upon me whilst I speak to thee.
Perhaps thou hast some secret cause, Aletes,
For all that kind attention thou hast shewn me,
From infancy till now? Why dost thou turn
Thy eyes to earth? 'Tis plain thou hast a cause:
Thou know'st from whom I spring; how can'st thou else
With confidence assert, that yet ere night
I shall know all?—Say this at least, Aletes,
Shall the Queen's anger cease?

Alet. It shall, Ilyssus.
Ev'n now I wait her here; on what design
I must not yet inform thee. The next time
Thou shalt behold her thou wilt find a change
Incredible indeed, from rage to fondness,
From cold reserve to tears of bursting joy.

[Ilyssus *is going to speak eagerly.*

——Ask me no more.—Yet something did'st thou say
Relating to the cause which fix'd me here
Thy guardian, thy instructor, and——the time
Will come, when thou shalt know it all, Ilyssus,
And bless my memory.

Ilys. Thou weep'st Aletes.
My tears will mingle too.

Alet. Forbear, and leave me.
Yet stay awhile, for now perhaps we part
To meet no more.

Ilys. No more! Thou wilt not leave me
When most I want thy care? 'Twas my first thought,
'Twas the first boon I ask'd of the good King,
That thou might'st be my kind instructor still.
He prais'd my gratitude, and I had promis'd
To bring him to thy cottage. He himself
Shall be a suitor to thee.

Alet. Thou hast ask'd
Thou know'st not what: it cannot be, Ilyssus,
That Xuthus and Aletes e'er should meet
On terms of amity. The smiles of greatness
To me have lost their value. For thy love
I could do much, and to be sever'd from thee
Pulls at my heart-strings. But resistless Fate
Has fix'd its seal, and we must part for ever,
How hard soe'er it seem. Thy youth will soon,
Amidst the busy scenes of active greatness,
Forget its monitor: but I must bear
In hopeless solitude the pangs of absence
Till thought shall be no more.

Ilys. O, heavenly Powers!
Then there is something dreadful yet conceal'd.
I cannot part from thee in ignorance.
Tell me, Aletes.

Alet. Would I could! But now
It must not be.—Haste to the banquet, youth,
Thy duty calls thee thither.

Ilys. Go I cannot,

Till thou assur'st me we shall meet again.
Alet. If possible we will. If not, remember,
When thou shalt know thyself, that on thyself
Thy fate depends; that Virtue, Glory, Happiness,
Are close connected, and their sad reverse
Is Vice, is Pain, is Infamy.—Alas!
These were the lessons of thy private life,
This I have told thee oft, but my fond tongue
Runs o'er its former precepts, and forgets
Thou now must mount a throne; a larger scene
Of duty opens.
Ilys. Yet the tender friend,
Who should direct me, leaves me to myself.
Can'st thou abandon me?
Alet. Would Fate permit
I would attend thee still. But, Oh, Ilyssus,
Whate'er becomes of me, when thou shalt reach
That envied pinnacle of earthly greatness,
Where faithful monitors but rarely follow,
Ev'n there, amidst the kindest smiles of fortune,
Forget not thou wert once distress'd and friendless.
Be strictly just; but yet, like Heaven, with mercy
Temper thy justice. From thy purged ear
Banish base flattery, and spurn the wretch
Who would persuade thee thou art more than man;
Weak, erring, selfish man, endued with power
To be the minister of public good!
If conquest charm thee, and the pride of war
Blaze on thy sight, remember thou art placed
The guardian of mankind, nor build thy fame
On rapines and on murders. Should soft peace
Invite to luxury, the pleasing bane
Of happy kingdoms, know from thy example

The bliss or woe of nameless millions springs,
Their virtue, or their vice. "Nor think by laws
"To curb licentious man; those laws alone
"Can bend the headstrong many to their yoke,
"Which make it present int'rest to obey them."
Oh, boy!——

Enter PYTHIA *hastily.*

Pyth. Ilyssus! wherefore art thou here?
The King expects thee, and the banquet waits.

Ilys. I cannot go.

Alet. Thou must; thy fate depends
Upon thy absence now. The Queen approaches.
After the banquet I again will see thee,
And thou shalt know the whole. I will, by Heaven. [*Ex.* Ilys.
Pythia, away, and wait me in the Temple. [*Exit* Pythia.
She saw them not; on her contracted brow
Sits brooding care. She speaks! My heart beats thick,
And my tongue trembles to perform its office.
Now Fate attend, and perfect thine own work!

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. To what have I consented?—Ha! who art thou
That thus intrud'st on sacred privacy,
When the o'erburthen'd mind unloads its griefs,
Its hoarded miseries?

Alet. Thy better genius!

Creu. That voice is sure familiar to my ear!
Who art thou? Speak.

Alet. One whom adversity
Has taught to know himself. I bring thee tidings
Of an unhappy man who wrong'd thee much,
But much repented of the wrongs he did thee;

Of thy Nicander, Queen.

Creu. Nicander, say'st thou?
Oh, then thou art indeed my better genius!

Alet. Now arm thy soul for wonders yet to come!
Perhaps he lives.

Creu. He lives! [*Looking on him with amazement.*

Alet. [*After great irresolution and struggles with himself.*]
Behold him here! [*She faints.*
—What has my rashness done?—The blush of life
Has left her cheek, the pulse forgets to move.
Where shall I turn? I cannot call for aid,
Nor can I leave her thus.——She breathes, she stirs!
—Yes, yes, Creusa, thy Nicander lives,
And he will catch at least this dear embrace,
Though now thou art another's.

Creu. Gracious Gods!
It is, it is Nicander!—'tis my lord!
Oh, I am only thine! no power on earth
Shall e'er divide us more.
—It cannot be, my senses all deceive me——
And yet it is.——Oh, let me gaze upon thee,
Recall each trace which marks thee for my own,
And gives me back the image of my heart!
How time and grief have chang'd thee! "But my love
"Can know no change. My lord, my life, my husband!"
Where hast thou wander'd? How hast thou been hid
From love's all-piercing sight? The bloody ruffians,
How didst thou escape their rage? Or did they wreak
Upon the helpless innocent alone
Their impious vengeance?

Nic. Nor on me, nor him
Did vengeance fall.

Creu. Does he live?

Nic. He does.

" *Creu.* Oh, honest Phorbas! Murder now is virtue.
" [*Aside.*"

" *Nic.*" The fabled murder was all stratagem
Contriv'd for thy dear sake; no impious ruffians
Pursued our steps: I found that I had wrong'd thee
Beyond redress, nor knew another means
But by my death to save thee from dishonour.
" Despair I thought might conquer love, and thou
" Once more be Athens' pride." The precious charge
Forbade a real death, I therefore stain'd
With blood my well-known garments, which produc'd—

Creu. A curs'd effect!—But I have nearer fears—
How cam'st thou hither? Wherefore to these shades?—
The boy, where is he?

Nic. Far from hence——

Creu. Thank Heav'n!

Nic. He lives in peace and safety.—What disturbs thee?

Creu. Nothing—I dare not tell him what I fear'd;
His honest breast might shudder at the guilt,
Though now it be more needful.—The dear boy,
Say, is he brave?

Nic. As woman could desire.

Creu. And form'd like thee?

Nic. His person far exceeds
What my most vigorous youth could boast, Creusa;
And his firm mind is wisdom's aged strength,
With all youth's graces soften'd.

Creu. 'Tis too much!
Oh, happy mother! Call'st thou him Nicander?

Nic. No, Ion, 'twas the name the matron chose,
Who gave him to my care.

Creu. Then Ion be it:
Ion shall reign in Athens. Know'st thou, love,

The curs'd design which this Æolian here,
And the vile maid—
Nic. The priestess, it should seem,
With Xuthus has conspir'd to fix his race
On Athens' throne.
Creu. But never shall his race
That sceptre wield.
Nic. It never shall, Creusa.
I have a means——
Creu. My means, thank Heaven, is surer! [*Aside.*
Nic. But I will tell thee all from first to last.
Hear then, and weigh my words, for fate is in them.
Xuthus, th' Athenian King——
Creu. I think not of him.
Nic. Beware of that. Whate'er thou think'st, Creusa,
Xuthus must still reign on, thy lord and husband.
Creu. Xuthus, my lord! then what art thou, Nicander?
Dost thou despise me for a crime thyself
Hast forc'd me to commit? My soul was thine
Ev'n when I gave my hand, and still remains
Untainted, undefil'd.
Nic. I know it well,
Thou dearest, best of women!——My torn heart
Drops blood while I propose it, yet we must,
We must for ever part.—Forbear, Creusa—
That killing look strikes through me.—Think, Oh, think,
What in this age of absence I have borne,
How combated each tender thought, and liv'd
For thy dear sake a victim to despair!
But now if thou consent'st, all, all is mine,
And I forgive my fate.—The dear, dear boy,
I have a means to place him on the throne
Secure as we could wish.
Creu. Secure he shall be,

I will proclaim him to the world as mine,
And Athens shall with joy receive its sov'reign;
The tyrant Xuthus shall be taught to fear
A master's frown.

Nic. Thy rashness, my Creusa,
May ruin all.

Creu. I will be rash, if this
Be rashness, to declare to earth, to heav'n,
A mother's heart-felt joy, whose only child,
Snatch'd from the grave, unhop'd for, comes to claim,
With every grace and every virtue crown'd,
Th' imperial seat of his great ancestors.
And shall we want a means?

Nic. We need not wait;
For by my care th' important means is found
Already, and no human power but thine
Can hinder our success. I would have hid
The secret from thee till thy wish'd consent
Had giv'n my purpose strength, but thou defeat'st
My utmost caution, and wilt force me tell thee,
Ilyssus is young Ion!——Ha! Creusa!
What means this look? Good Heaven! how her eye fixes!
"What have I done? What said, which could attack
"The seats of sense with this amazing force?"
My wife, my Queen, Oh, speak!——

Creu. Off, touch me not——
Thou canst not bring relief!——Oh, I am curs'd
Beyond all power of aid! Thou too art curs'd,
And know'st it not.——He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Amazement! Who?

Creu. Oh, had he not been mine,
His youth, his softness, each attracting grace—
I should have staid whole ages, ere in thought

I had consented to so damn'd a deed!
Tears, tears, why burst ye not?—But what have I
To do with tears? Those are for tender mothers.
" The tygress weeps not o'er her mangled prey."
He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Who? Ilyssus?
Speak, speak, Creusa!

Creu. Phorbas urg'd the deed,
And I consented; at the feast he dies
By poison.—" Oh, my soul!"

Nic. Fly then, this instant!
Perhaps thou may'st prevent it: as thou cam'st
He parted hence—I knew not to his death!

Creu. I go, I fly!

Nic. Yet stay, thy rashness there,
If fate has sav'd him, may undo us yet:
—The Pythia! true, the Pythia shall rush in
To stop the fatal banquet, and declare
The feast unhallow'd; " at this lucky moment
" She waits me in the Temple."—Stay, Creusa.

[*Exit* Nicander.

Creu. The Pythia, no; I will myself outstrip
The lightning's speed. Whatever be th' event,
'Tis not too late to die. [*Exit.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Laurel Grove. Enter PHORBAS *and* LYCEA.

Lycea.

OH, Earth! Oh, Heaven! Oh, wretched, wretched Athens!

Phor. Speak on, Lycea; wherefore art thou silent?
Why dost thou lead me to this secret shade?

What mean thy flowing tears?
Lyc. The Queen, the Queen!
Phor. Say, what of her?
Lyc. I know not; all to me
Is terror and confusion.
Phor. What thou know'st
Relate.
Lyc. She sent me forth to seek thee, Phorbas;
I found thee not, but met at my return
Creusa's self. Despair was in her eyes;
With hasty steps she shot impatient by me,
Nor listen'd when I spoke. I follow'd wond'ring,
And enter'd the pavilion.
Phor. The pavilion!
Why, went she to the banquet?
Lyc. Eager went,
Despair and anguish mixing on her look.
But, O good Heaven, how chang'd was that despair
To inexpressive joy, when from the crowd
She learnt Ilyssus had delay'd the feast,
And won the King once more to ask her presence,
'Where is he? let me clasp him to my breast,'
She cried; 'I now no longer will resist
'Heaven's high command.' Imperial Xuthus rose
With transport to receive her, and loud shouts
Proclaim'd the people's joy. When, death to sight!
Eternal pain to memory! the slave
Presents the goblet. 'Fill,' she cried, 'a third,
I too will hail Ilyssus King of Athens.
But first, all swear, swear by immortal Jove,
By the far-darting God who here presides,
And the chaste guardian of our native fanes,
Swear here, swear all, and binding be the oath,

Ilyssus only shall be Athens' King.'

Phor. What could she mean?

Lyc. Attentive Xuthus caught
With joy the happy omen, and all swore
Ilyssus only should be Athens' King.
This done, I saw her from Ilyssus' hand
Snatch the dire goblet, and to him resign
Her own untouch'd. The slave who mix'd the draught
Turn'd pale and trembled: I with eager zeal
Press'd forward, but in vain; she firmly grasp'd
The bowl, and, smiling, drank it to the dregs.

Phor. The poison, ha!—I knew her foolish fondness
Would start at murder's name. But wherefore die?
Why turn upon herself her impious rage?
'Twas madness all; or else some new contrivance,
Some fresh Æolian fraud.—I care not what.
I yet will blast their schemes.—Yes, let her die,
By her own folly perish. Athens still
Survives, and shall survive.—I must be sudden.
She doubtless will betray me to the King,
And cut off ev'n this last resource. Lycea,
Be secret, and thy country shall be free.

Lyc. Were it not better, Phorbas, first to see her.
Perhaps some secret unreveal'd may lurk
Beneath this show of unexampled rashness.
She left the banquet soon, and with the Pythia
Enter'd the Temple.

Phor. With the Pythia, say'st thou?
Then there is mischief toward.

Lyc. Yet now alone
We may surprize her, for I saw the maid
Quick from the fane return with hasty steps,
As if dispatch'd on some important message,

Perhaps to find thee out. Sure thou should'st see her.

Phor. And perish!—ha!—No, no, my sacred country,
Too much already have I been deceiv'd;
I will not leave thee in a woman's power.—
—Yet hold, Lycea may inform her of them,
And my designs prove yet abortive. Maid,
Thy presence may be needful.

Lyc. Mine! Good Heaven,
In what? Creusa will require my aid:
At least my tears are due to my poor Queen
In her last moments.

Phor. Stay, she wants them not;
I know the poison's force too well, Lycea,
To fear a death so sudden. This way, maid;
Nay, thou must go; I shall have business for thee,
Some secret message to the Queen, Lycea,
Which thou alone can'st bear. [*Exeunt.*

Enter PYTHIA *and* NICANDER.

Pyth. 'Twas he; I saw him and Lycea with him.
Sure he should be inform'd!—Thou hear'st me not.

Nic. This action of the Queen sits near my heart.

Pyth. She bade me tell thee—But why waste we time,
Thou now may'st enter at the postern gate,
Unseen by all.

Nic. Why did'st thou not rush in, and stop the feast?
Thy speedy presence there had sav'd us all.

Pyth. What could I do? The Queen was there already,
And all seem'd peace and joy. Could I suspect
That poison lurk'd beneath so fair a seeming?

Nic. She breaks thro' my designs.—Unhappy woman!
My soul bleeds for her, and confusion hangs
On ev'ry rising thought.——The dear, dear boy!—

Where is he, at the banquet still?

Pyth. He is.

Nic. And where Creusa?

Pyth. I already told thee,
But thou regard'st not, in the Temple's gloom
Retir'd she sits, expecting thy approach.
We there may settle all.

Nic. I fear her much.
" Thou see'st her passions are too near concern'd
" To be of use to us; thy cooler sense
" Must here direct us." Does the poison's power
Affect her yet?

Pyth. Not yet; I would have tried
Some powerful antidote to quell its force;
But she refuses life, and only begs
To see her son and thee.

Nic. I will attend
Upon the instant. But first hear me, Pythia;
Thou seest on what a precipice we stand.
It were in vain to hope we could conceal
The truth from Xuthus, from the rest we may;
'Tis thy task therefore——

Pyth. What? To own the fraud,
And publish to the King that Delphi's shrine
Is not oracular? Ha!

Nic. To the King
'Twere better sure to publish the deceit
Than to the world; and where's the means but this
To hide it? By Creusa's art thou say'st
He is already bound in solemn oaths
To leave Ilyssus heir to Athens' throne.
Can'st thou not add still stronger oaths, or ere
Thou dost reveal the secret of our fate?

Then who shall dare to break them? Shall the King?
Thou know'st his scrup'lous piety extends
Almost to weakness. What should tempt him to it?
Creusa dead, can frame no schemes against him;
The boy to him alone must owe his greatness;
And for Nicander, never more shall Greece
Hear his forgotten name.

Pyth. It must be so;
And yet——

Nic. What yet? To Phorbas thou with ease
May'st own the truth. He will not start at fraud
In sacred things.——But see, the Queen approaches
Impatient of our stay. She changes not!
The bloom of health is still upon her cheek!
Fain would I hope——But hopes, alas, are vain!——
What hast thou done, Creusa?

Enter CREUSA.

Creu. Sav'd Ilyssus!

Nic. Thou might'st have liv'd with honour.

Creu. Liv'd! Good Heaven!
I start, I tremble at the thoughts of life!
Can'st thou reflect on what I had design'd,
On what I am, and what, alas, I have been,
And not perceive death was my only refuge?—
—Am I not Xuthus' wife, and what art thou?
Oh had'st thou seen the torments of my soul,
When in one hasty moment it ran o'er
The business of an age, weigh'd all events,
Saw Xuthus, thee, Ilyssus, Athens bleed
In one promiscuous carnage!—Light at length
Burst through the gloom, and Heaven's own voice proclaim'd
One victim might suffice.——

For Xuthus' honour strove, and mightier love
Assum'd Nicander's cause. Who then could fall?
Could Xuthus? Could Nicander? ——No;—Creusa.
Nic. Would'st thou have been less kind!—But, O my Queen,
To blame thee now were vain!———
Creu. To blame! 'Tis praise,
'Tis triumph I demand. He lives! he reigns!
Young Ion lives! Young Ion reigns in Athens!
O bring him, Pythia, bring him to my arms;
Let me but pour a last sad blessing o'er him,
And death hath lost its terrors!
How now, Lycea?

Enter LYCEA *hastily.*

Lyc. Mighty Queen, I know not
If thy command would authorize th' attempt,
But Phorbas, with an arm'd Athenian band,
Now enters the pavilion, to destroy
The King and young Ilyssus.
Nic. Earth and Heaven!
What say'st thou, maid?
Creu. O let me fly to save him!
Here shall their poniards———
Nic. Rest thou there, Creusa.
Thy embassies to-day have prov'd too fatal.
My life for his I save him from the stroke,
And on the instant send him to thy arms.
Now, Fate, be doubly mine! [*Exit.*
Creu. Off, let me go!—I will not be restrain'd!—
They tear him piecemeal!
Pyth. Patience, mighty Queen!
What man can do Nicander will perform.
Creu. He is a father only to my child,

He cannot tell them what a mother feels.—
—Phorbas was born the curse of me and mine.
I might have known to what his impious rage
Would urge him on, and should have first inform'd him.
—Gods! must I never know sweet peace again?
Not even in death have rest?

Pyth. Behold who comes
To bless thee ere thou diest, and cease to murmur
At Heav'n's high will.

Enter ILYSSUS.

Creu. It is, it is Ilyssus!——
My son, my son!

Ilys. Good Heavens! and do I live
To see a parent melt in fondness o'er me?
—Aletes sav'd me from the soldiers' arms,
And bade me fly to find a mother here.
Art thou indeed that mother, mighty Queen?
And may I call thee so? Thou art, thy looks,
Thy tears, thy kind embrace, all, all proclaim
The truth—O let me thus, thus on my knees——

Creu. Rise, rise, my child!—I am, I am thy mother!

Ilys. O sacred sound! Ilyssus is no more
That outcast youth—a mother and a Queen
He finds at once!

Creu. But art thou safe, my child?
Hast thou no wound?

Ilys. The old grey-headed man,
Who brought this morn the news of thy arrival,
Had rais'd against my breast his eager sword,
Defenceless I; when good Aletes came
And snatch'd me from the stroke. I would have staid,
Unarm'd with him have staid; but his command

Was absolute, that I should fly to find,
What I have found, a mother!
Yet, Oh, Queen!
Why am I thus encompass'd round with wonder?
May I not know this riddle of my fate?
Why first condemn'd to pass my infant days
In this obscure retreat? If I am thine,
Thy son, illustrious Queen, sure I was born
To thrones and empires?

Creu. Thou art born to thrones,
And shalt in Athens reign.

Ilys. As Xuthus' heir?—
Is Xuthus then my sire? Forgive me, Queen,
I have a thousand, and a thousand doubts.
Can Xuthus be my sire?

Pyth. Forbear, Ilyssus,
Nor press thy fate too far. When time permits,
Thou shalt know all.

Creu. Shalt know it now, Ilyssus,
Not Xuthus is thy sire, but that brave man,
Who but this instant snatch'd thee from thy fate,
And by that act proclaim'd himself a father.

Ilys. Aletes?

Creu. Not Aletes, but Nicander,
My wedded lord, thy sire!—And see, he comes
To bless thee, and confirm the sacred truth.
—Good Heav'n, he bleeds!

Enter NICANDER.

Nic. To death, to death, Creusa!
Amid the fray I met the fate I sought for.
All else is safe, and Xuthus now pursues
A scatter'd few, who fall beneath his sword.

—Where is my boy?——Ye guards of innocence!
How has he been beset, and how escap'd!
—Where is my boy? for I may own him now,
And clasp him to my breast; no more Aletes,
The sage instructor of a youth unknown,
But the dear father weeping o'er his child.

Both. Oh, Sir, what gratitude before inspir'd
Let duty pay!

Nic. I have no time to waste
In fondness now. Hear my last words, Ilyssus,
And bind them to thy heart. Thou still must live
The son of Xuthus. The good Pythia here
Will tell thee all the story of thy fate;
And may'st thou prosper as thou dost obey
Her sacred counsel! Xuthus too must know
The fatal tale; but to the world beside
It must be hid in darkness.

Pyth. Phorbas sure
Should be inform'd.

Nic. Phorbas has breath'd his last;
And the brib'd slave who mix'd the poisonous draught
Fell by this hand.—Ilyssus, Oh, farewel!
I will not bid adieu to thee, Creusa——
Thy colour changes, and the lamp of life
Fades in thy eye; we soon shall meet again.
Ilyssus, Oh!——

Ilys. How hard he grasps my hand!
My lord, my father! Have I learn'd so late,
To call thee by that name, and must I lose,
For ever lose——Good Heaven, she grasps me too!
What means it, Pythia? the cold damps of death
Are on her.

Creu. Oh, my child, enquire no farther;

'Tis fitting we should part. Lycea, Pythia,
Intreat of Xuthus——yet I need not fear
His goodness; though I wrong'd him, foully wrong'd him,
He yet will prove a father to my child,
And from the world conceal the fatal truth.
Oh, I am cold!—what bolts of ice shoot through me!—
How my limbs shiver!—Nearer yet, my child,
My sight grows dim, and I could wish to gaze
For ever on thee.—Oh, it will not be!—
Ev'n thou art lost, Ilyssus!—Oh—Farewel! [*Dies.*

Isip. She dies, she dies! Was I then only mock'd
With a vain dream of bliss, to be plung'd back
In deeper misery? Did I but hear
The tender name of child breath'd fondly o'er me,
To make me feel what 'tis to lose that name?
Oh, I am ten times more an orphan now
Than when I knew no parents!

Enter XUTHUS, *&c.*

Xuth. Where is this murd'ress, who with vile deceit
Seem'd to consent to our's and Heaven's designs,
Only to make us a more easy prey
To her assassins?—Ha, Creusa dead!
And the brave stranger who preserv'd us all?
Is he too dead?—The boy——

Pyth. Ilyssus lives.
And thou hast sworn, great King, that he shall reign
Supreme in Athens. Say, dost thou confirm
That oath?

Xuth. I do, by Heaven!

Pyth. Ask here no more.
The fatal tale is for thy private ear.
Retire, and learn it all. For poor Creusa,

She wrong'd not thee, upon herself alone
She drew Heaven's vengeance. And too surely proves
That murder but intentional, not wrought
To horrid act, before th' eternal throne
Stands forth the first of crimes. Who dare assume,
Unwarranted, Heaven's high prerogative
O'er life and death, with double force shall find
Turn'd on themselves the mischiefs they design'd.

[*Exeunt.*

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EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN IN THE CHARACTER OF PYTHIA.

AT length I'm freed from tragical parade,
No more a Pythian priestess—though a maid;
At once resigning, with my sacred dwelling,
My wreaths, my wands, my arts of fortune-telling.
Yet superstitious folks, no doubt, are here,
Who still regard me with a kind of fear,
Lest to their secret thoughts these prying eyes
Should boldly pass, and take them by surprise.
Nay, though I disavow the whole deceit,
And fairly own my science all a cheat,
Should I declare, in spite of ears and eyes,
The beaus were handsome, or the critics wise,
They'd all believe it, and with dear delight,
Say to themselves at least,
'The girl has taste;' 'the woman's in the right.'
Or should I tell the ladies, so dispos'd,
They'd get good matches ere the season clos'd,
They'd smile, perhaps, with seeming discontent,
And, sneering, wonder what the creature meant;
But whisper to their friends, with beating heart,
'Suppose there should be something in her art.'
Grave statesmen too would chuckle, should I say,
On such a motion, and by such a day,
They would be summon'd from their own affairs
To 'tend the nation's more important cares;

'Well, if I must——howe'er I dread the load,
I'll undergo it——for my country's good.'
All men are bubbles, in a skilful hand,
The ruling passion is the conjuror's wand.
Whether we praise, foretell, persuade, advise,
'Tis that alone confirms us fools or wise.
The devil without may spread the tempting sin,
But the sure conqueror is——the devil within.